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JULY 2010

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Spotlight on Anhui's Preserved Culture

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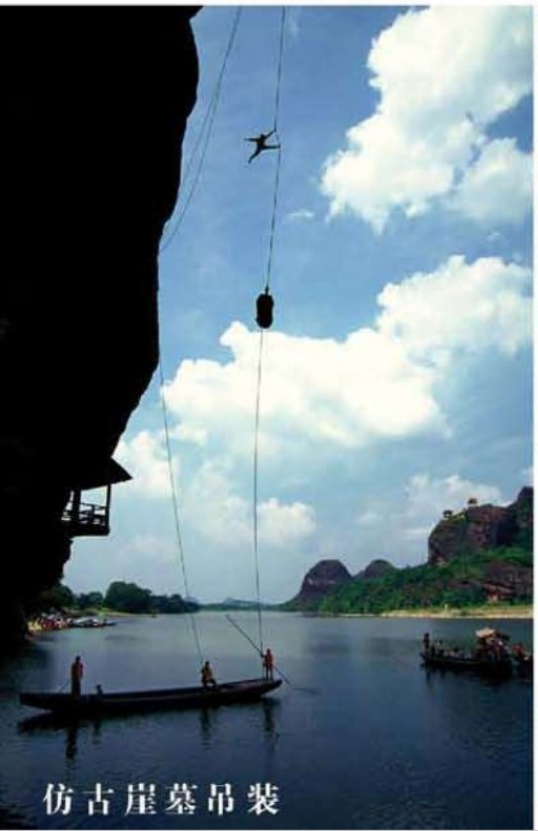
--the Taoist Holy Place in China the World Geopark Dragon and Tiger Mountain in Jiangxi



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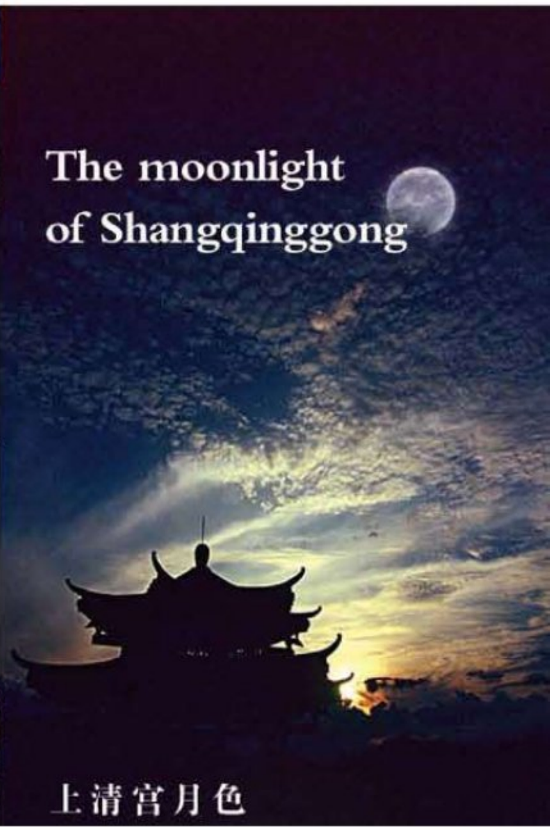
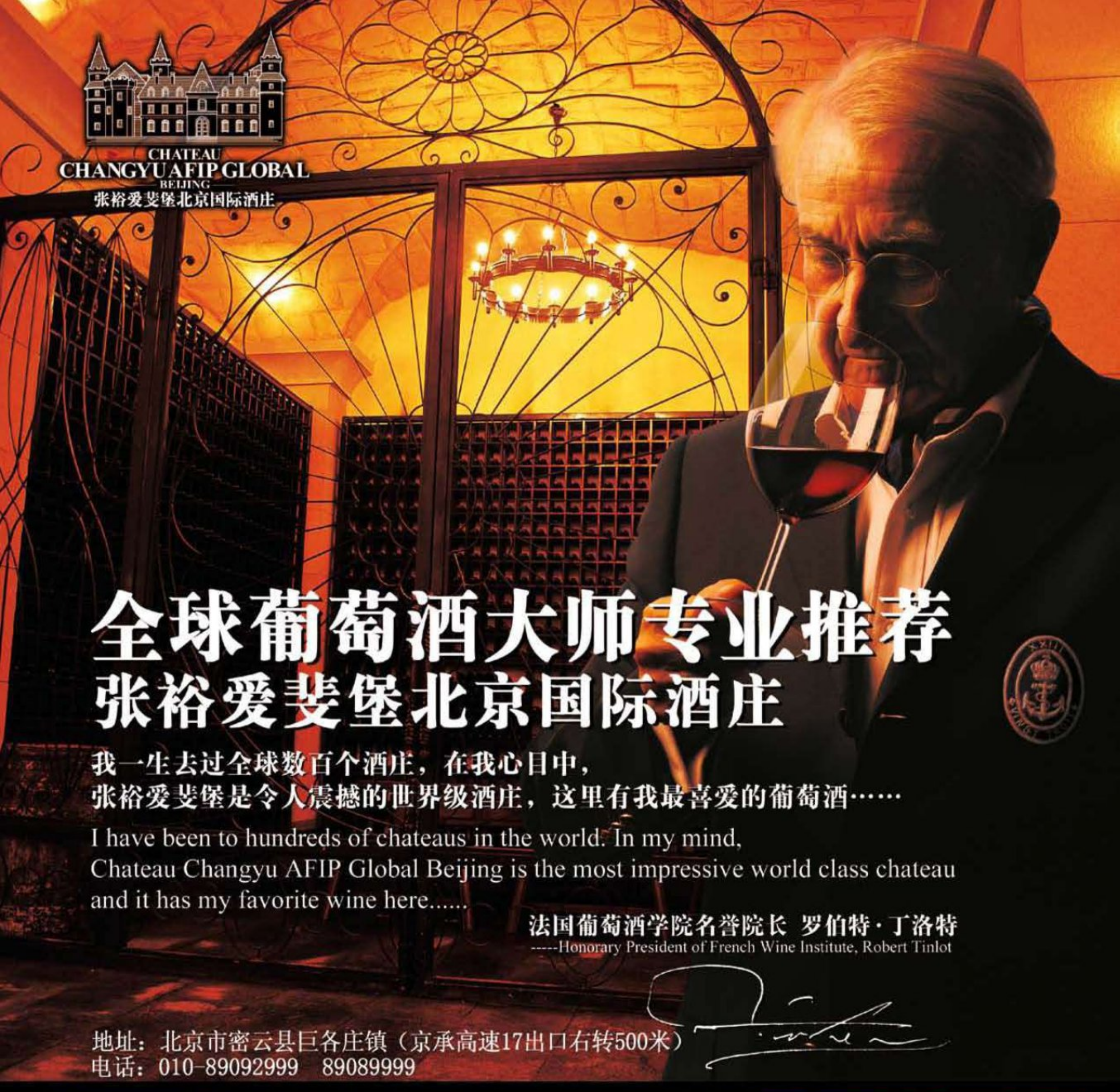
Taoist Temple 山顶道观

The new tourist centre
新游客中心



The moonlight of Shangqinggong

上清宫月色



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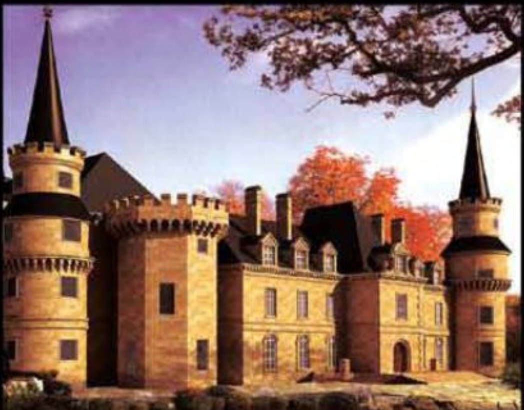

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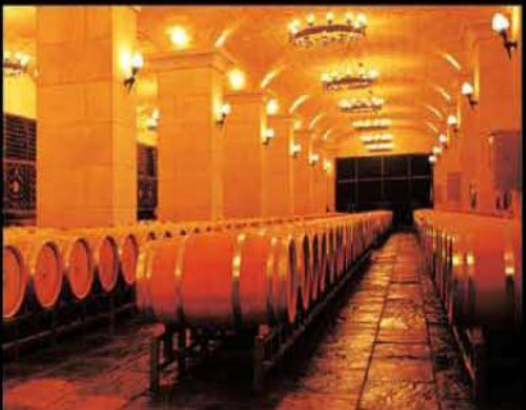

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JULY 2010

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Front Cover:
February 8, 2008: Chinese President Hu Jintao, also General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and Chairman of the CPC Central Military Commission, joins local villagers in spinning thread in the countryside of Baise, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

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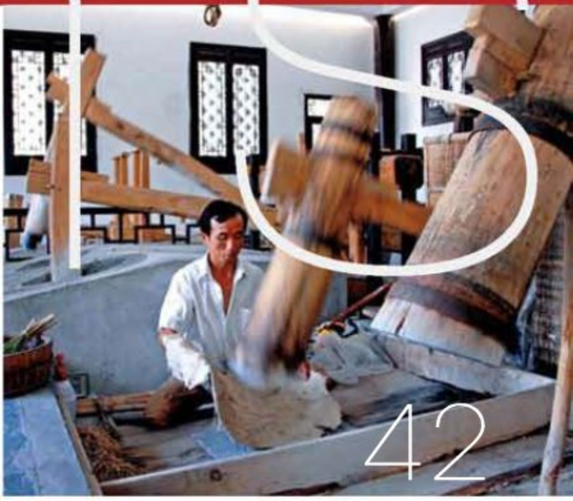

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CHINA PICTORIAL

Travel Destination of the Month

Saving Spring

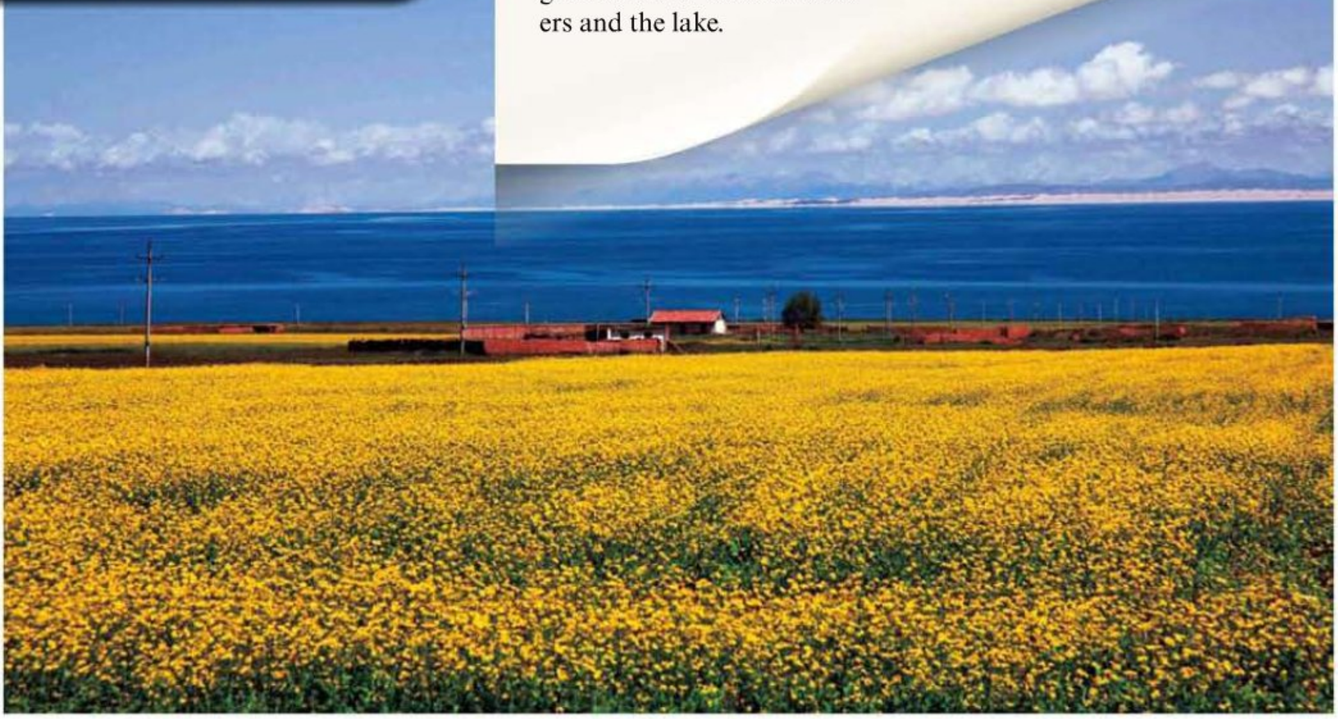
On a summer evening, it doesn't get much more pleasant than sipping a glass of wine by a lake with a gentle breeze. Of the countless rivers and lakes in China, Qinghai Lake is one of the best choices for July.

In the northeastern part of Qinghai Province, the lake is the nation's largest inland body of water as well as the largest saltwater lake. With a total surface area of 4,456 square kilometers and a 360 kilometer circumference, the elliptical lake stretches to the horizon. At 3,260 meters above sea level, the area around the lake stays cool even during summer's hottest months. In July, the daily average temperature around the lake is 15 degrees Celsius, making it an ideal summer getaway.

However, the blissful temperature isn't the only reason that makes it one of July's best destinations. Throughout the month, fields of canola flowers grace the banks of the lake. Combined with the crystal clear water and endless blue sky, the patches of yellow flowers create a spectacular scene. As the flowers disappear into the horizon, the meadows can appear like waves of a golden sea. Canola flower is more common in southern China, where it blossoms in early spring. This factor makes the scene at Qinghai Lake against a backdrop of perpetually snowcapped mountains even more startling for visitors to the high altitudes of the Northwest.

The flowers around Qinghai Lake usually blossom in early July, and the optimum period to see them is from about July 15 to 25. Visitors often enjoy cycling tours around the lake to get plenty of great views of both the flowers and the lake.

Qinghai Lake attracts foreign cyclists. ***CFP***



Canola flowers are the highlight around Qinghai Lake in July. ***CFP***

Tibet's Highest Hotel

InterContinental Hotels Group recently celebrated the ground-breaking for the InterContinental Resort Lhasa Paradise in Tibet, which will be the brand's largest and highest-altitude hotel.

Owned by the Chengdu Exhibition and Travel Group, the scenic InterContinental Resort Lhasa Paradise is scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2012. Situated in Lhasa's newly developed business center and only a few kilometers away from the Potala Palace, the 2,000-room structure will be the largest hotel in Tibet.

Watermelon Festival

The time to sink your teeth into a juicy Beijing watermelon has finally arrived, heralded by a watermelon competition in Daxing. As in years past, Daxing District is hosting its annual watermelon festival, where watermelon-lovers from near and far gather to share the first bite of the traditional summer treat.

The owner of the winning watermelon, 74-year-old farmer Song Baosen, took home a prize of 10,000 yuan. Although the standard of judgment was the same, the scores for sugar content and weight this year were generally lower than before, due to inconsistent weather. In spite of this, the winning melon still trumped the competition with a weight of 24.35 kilograms.

Chaoyang Park Beach Carnival

Beijing's Chaoyang Park is set to become a hot bed of soccer action during the World Cup. The 2010 Beijing Beach Carnival, organized by BTV and the Beijing Sports Bureau, kicked off on June 5.

Lots of soccer activities, such as target practice and beach soccer, will be available to fans while they enjoy World Cup telecasts and other soccer-related programs.

Quake Site Thrives

A renowned site with a history of nearly 300 years, China Lane in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, just celebrated the second anniversary of its reopening. Activities for the month-long celebration include cultural performances, a traditional Dragon Boat Festival celebration, and an appearance by Chengdu native writer Liu Shahe.

After five years of protection and reconstruction, the lane reopened to the public on June 14, 2008, only one month after the devastating earthquake in Wenchuan County in Sichuan.

Cross-Himalayan Tourism Partnership

Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, is working to build a cross-Himalayan tourism partnership with neighboring countries such as Nepal, India, and Bhutan, which could help the area continue developing as a world class tourist attraction, says the Lhasa Municipal Tourism Administration.

According to Jiang Hua, director of Lhasa Municipal Tourism Bureau, the decision was made during the Fifth Forum on Tibet Work, with an aim to build Tibet into a "distinctive tourist destination" by promoting its tourism industry. As the capital city of Tibet, Lhasa holds the potential for significant tourism development.

Purple Sand Promotion

Recently, *Beijing Business Today* released the debut issue of its weekly magazine, *Purple Sand Pottery in China*, amidst an appreciative celebration of the pottery in Beijing. The event invited collectors and connoisseurs of purple sand pottery to discuss the culture of the craft and share new ideas to promote its development.

Noodle Heritage

In Yigou Village, Tangyin County of Henan Province, local pastry cooks have the unique ability to transform chopstick-thin dough into 200-meter-long hollow noodles as thin as strands of hair. The unique skill was handed down through generations in the village and is recognized as an intangible cultural heritage.

Making fine dried noodles. CFP

The filmmaking crew and the poster.

Record-Breaking *Don Quixote* Poster

The first Asian entirely 3D film, *Don Quixote*, released its official poster in Beijing, one of which cost a staggering 1 million yuan and measures 535 square feet, breaking the Guinness record for world's largest 3D poster.

The film's director, A Gan, explains that the poster idea was inspired by the original Spanish novel, and that the singularity of Cervantes work attracted him to adapt it. He changed the setting from 17th century Spain to Tang-Dynasty (618-907) China. The film follows a swordsman and his servant on an adventurous trek that begins in the city of Chang'an.

Beijing Officials Ponder Subway Price Hike

Beijing Municipal Government is considering a proposal from the city's advisers to raise subway ticket prices to five or six yuan during rush hour periods in hopes of reducing congestion. The existing nine subway lines transport more than 5.2 million passengers every day, making it the busiest subway system in China.

开往阜成门方向
To FUCHENGMEN

A Beijing subway station.

World Cup Spirit at the Expo

As the countdown to the World Cup in South Africa continued, the World Cup-themed South Africa Pavilion was gaining popularity among visitors to the Shanghai Expo. The design of the pavilion was inspired by the country's traditional rondavel (round house), interpreted in a modern way by fusing traditional designs with modern materials.

Visitors play foosball in the South Africa Pavilion of the Shanghai Expo. CFP

LOMO Launch

Beijing's 2nd Lomography Gallery Store and the fourth such store in Chinese mainland opened in Sanlitun, a downtown bar area in Beijing. Over 800 people attended the opening night party, which featured live music, drinks, scores of Lomo cameras and hordes of passionate fans.

The Lomography Gallery Store Beijing is not only the best place in China to get the full range of lomographic products, but also Beijing's hangout for Lomography lovers to meet, take part in workshops, hear guest speakers, and join parties.

The full range of lomographic products. by Yin Xing

Gaokao Numbers Down

The yearly *gaokao* (national college entrance examinations) ended throughout China on June 8, 2010. The exam, which lasts two to three days, is considered by most Chinese students to be essential for a bright future and successful career.

According to various reports, however, the number of exam-takers has been decreasing over the last few years. The total number of examinees this year was 9.57 million, 650,000 fewer than those who took the test in 2009. The sharp drop in *gaokao* participants poses a tough challenge for higher education in China. Critics complain that Chinese universities spend too much time engaging in fierce competition to attract the brightest students, rather than improving educational quality.

A mother greets her son after the examination. CFP

Raging Red

Raging Red, an American performing troupe, recently staged a fantastic performance to showcase American culture for a Beijing audience. The program included presentations of both traditional and contemporary music, dancing, and songs from the (British-born) Beatles to the delight of those in attendance. The event was both an art show and an interactive carnival.

美国迪克西州立
Raging Red Show

Raging Red Troupe performers.

Honoring the Past

President Hu's Visits to Old Revolutionary Bases

January 27, 2006: As Chinese New Year draws near, President Hu Jintao, also General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and Chairman of the CPC Central Military Commission, visits veterans at a nursing home in Yan'an, a former revolutionary base in Shaanxi Province. In the picture, he holds the hands of Liu Tianyou, 90, inquiring about her health.

January 28, 2006: On the eve of the Chinese New Year, during his inspection tour in Yan'an, President Hu visits the rural area of Ansai County, hidden amongst mountains. He was welcomed by villagers in festive costumes and joined them in singing and dancing to celebrate the coming Spring Festival.

While *China Pictorial* celebrates its 60th anniversary this July, festivities commemorating the 89th birthday of the Communist Party of China (CPC) fall on the same month. In honor of these occasions, *CP* presents a series of images documenting the several occasions in which President Hu Jintao, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, visited old revolutionary bases and spent time with local civilians.

Throughout our history of documenting the nation's steps of the past six decades, *China Pictorial* has kept the tradition of following Party and state leaders to record images of them sharing joys and sorrows with the citizens. Many such images, now deeply embedded in our memories, vividly depict the CPC's principle of "from the masses, to the masses."

During the snowy final weeks of 2002, soon after assuming the post of general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Hu Jintao visited the former seat of the CPC Central Committee during revolutionary times in Xibaipo, Hebei Province. There, he reviewed a speech that Mao Zedong delivered there in 1949, asking all party members to be modest, prudent, self-disciplined, and hardworking. Drawing on inspiration from the Mao speech, Hu urged local officials to empathize with citizens' difficulties, care about them, and do more for them. In the years that followed, the general secretary showed continued care and concern for the historic revolutionary bases, making in-

July 29, 2005: As people around the nation commemorate the 60th anniversary of victory in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, President Hu inspects Wuxiang County, a former revolutionary base in the Taihang Mountain Range of Shanxi Province. Beneath a clove tree, on the site of former headquarters of the Eighth Route Army, he chats with local veterans, inquiring about their health.

February 17, 2007: President Hu visits Li Cai, a Party member in Daping Village, Dingxi, Gansu Province. After inquiring about the family's daily life, he followed the hostess' direction in paper cutting, before decorating windows with their work. Afterwards, the president joined the family in the kitchen and sat with them to enjoy a New Year's Eve dinner.

January 28, 2006: On the eve of the Chinese New Year, President Hu Jintao visits Kang Haifa and his family in Hougoumen Village, Ansai County, Shaanxi.

spection tours several times, the latest being during the Spring Festival of 2010, when he set foot on the rain-soaked soil of Gutian in western Fujian Province.

The visits aimed to honor the tremendous contributions made by the former revolutionary bases during the war era in liberating the nation. The fine tradition of revolutionary spirit that found deep roots in these places was praised, a spirit which Hu said provided "strong spiritual power encouraging us to overcome hardship to ultimately triumph." Concerned about the modern development of the areas, Hu asked local officials to "adhere to the principles of working for the public and using power for the people, and carry forward the Party's tradition of serving the people." To local residents who are primarily engaged in agriculture, he expressed hope that the revolutionary bases will follow a path that leads to rapid development both economically and socially, which would culminate in affluent lives for them.

During his visits, the general secretary joined local farmers in their everyday lives, working the fields and enjoying recreational activities. He spoke to the locals to understand their living conditions, listened to their hopes and desires, and eased their minds with warm words. His heartfelt speeches and sincere handshakes fully embodied the CPC's governing philosophy of "exercising power for the people, showing concern for them, and working for their interests."

From January 24-25, 2009, prior to the arrival of Chinese New Year, President Hu visited officials and residents of the former revolutionary base in Jinggangshan, Jiangxi Province. In the picture, Hu Jintao grinds soybeans with Wu Jianzhong, a villager of Changpu in Xiaping Town.

From February 12-13, 2010, after a visit to the site of the Gutian Meeting in Longyan, Fujian Province, President Hu had a meeting with veteran Red Army soldiers.

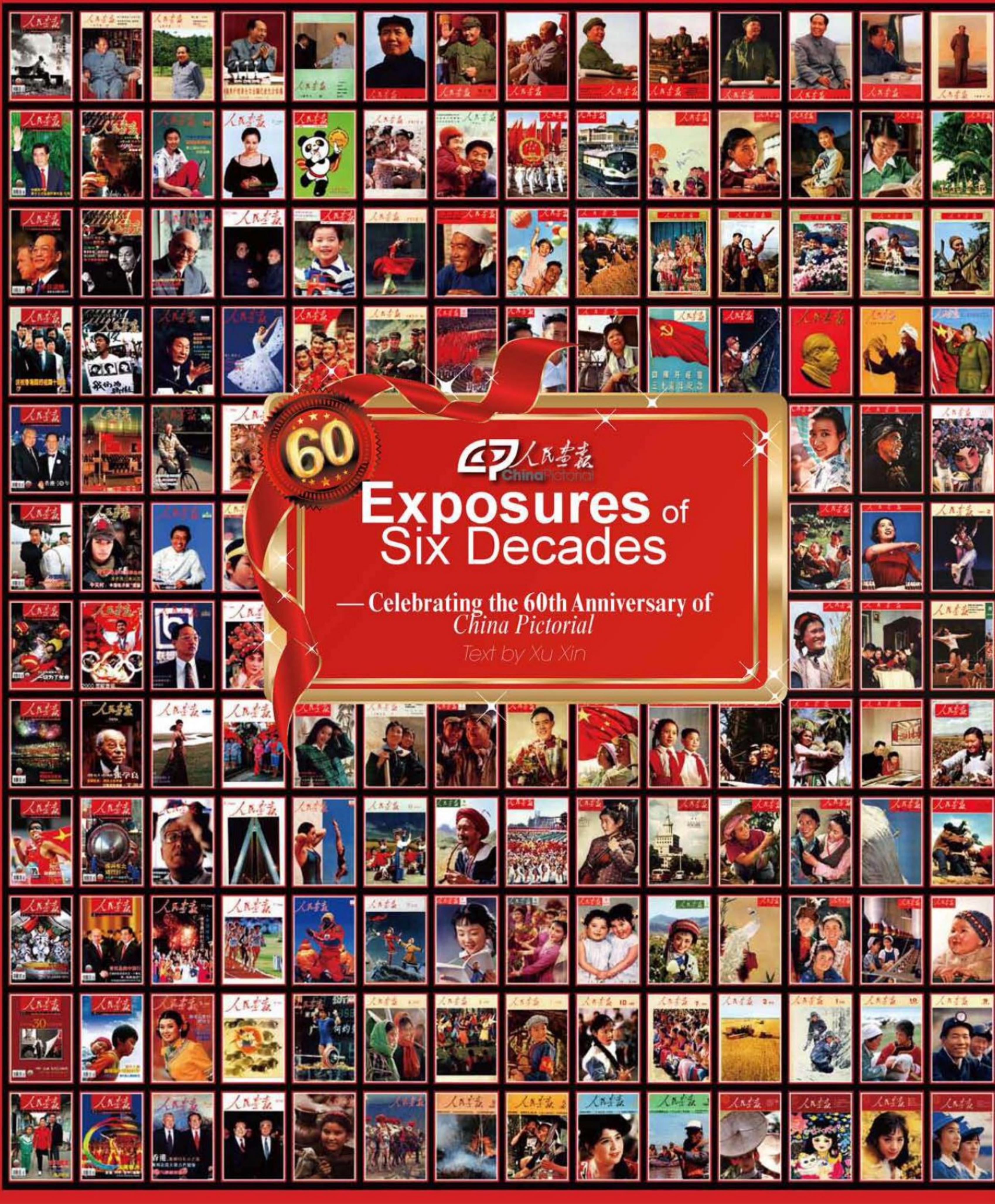
February 17, 2007: President Hu pays a special visit to the Memorial Hall of the Victory of Red Army's Long March in Huining County, Gansu Province. In October 1936, the three major forces of the Red Army joined together in Huining, which marked the triumphant culmination of the Long March. After leaving the Memorial Hall, Hu met with veteran Red Army soldiers, inquiring about their lives.

January 24, 2009: President Hu Jintao greets locals at a supermarket in Jinggangshan, Jiangxi.

February 8, 2008: On the second day of the lunar year, President Hu Jintao poses with local veteran Red Army soldiers and their families at the Baise Uprising Museum, Guangxi.

February 8, 2008: President Hu Jintao visits the home of Wei Zusheng, a villager in the countryside of Baise, Guangxi.

From February 12-13, 2010, President Hu celebrated the Chinese New Year at an old revolutionary base in Longyan City, Fujian Province. After a visit to the site of the Gutian Meeting, he came to the home of Zhang Tangmei in Wulong Village, where he joined the family in preparing the New Year's Eve dinner and discussed their living and work conditions.



Exposures of Six Decades

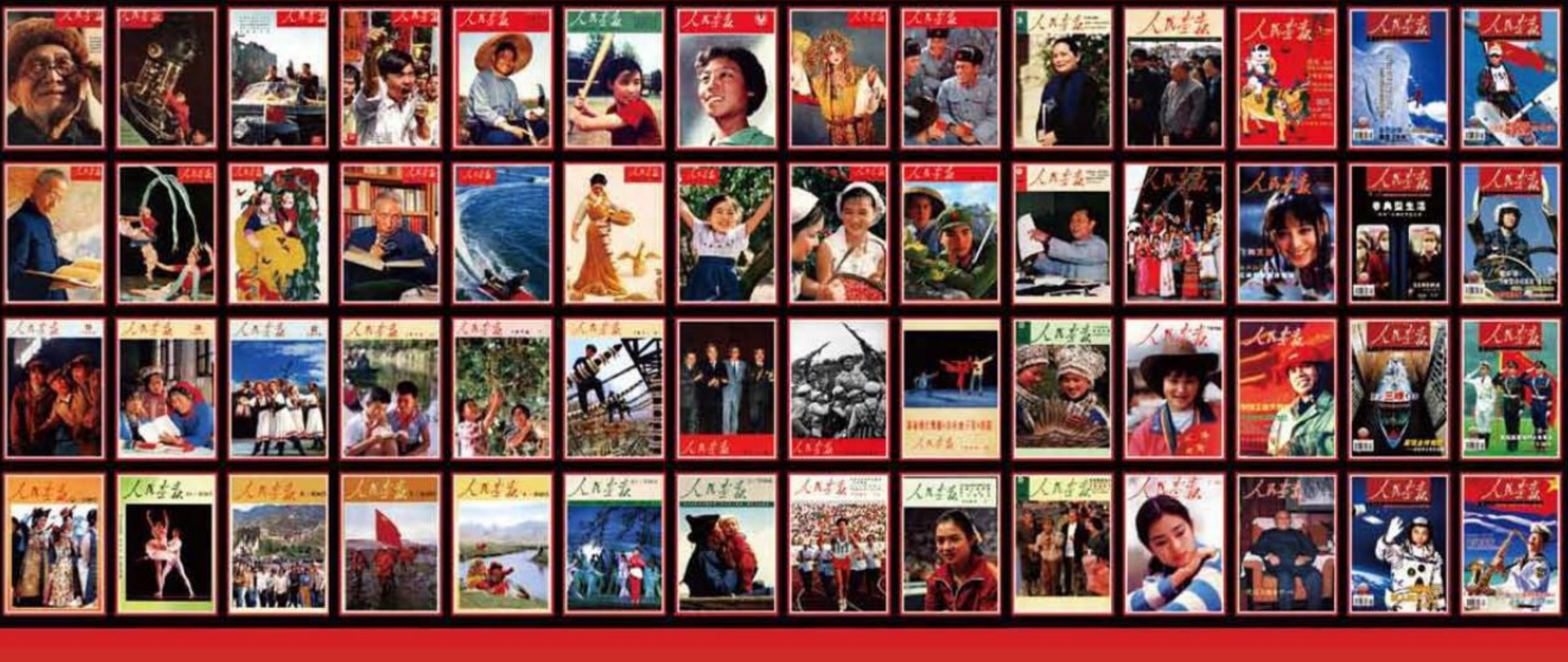
—Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of *China Pictorial*

Text by Xu Xin

In July 1950, a month after Mao Zedong handwrote the official masthead for the magazine, the 56-page first issue of *China Pictorial* (or *People's Pictorial* in the Chinese version) was released. The cover was color, and its extensive use of photos was rare in Chinese journalism at the time. The magazine's editorial philosophy was clearly illustrated by its original mission statement: "As our nation progresses with each passing day, and each citizen's life changes, *China Pictorial* will use cameras and pens to report every inspirational development across the country."

The magazine has withstood the test of time and enjoyed 60 straight years of nonstop publication, making this issue the 745th consecutive edition. With its high-quality photographs and informative articles, the monthly has endeavored to share the many faces of China with the rest of the world. *China Pictorial* is dedicated to vividly documenting the country's social progress and economic growth in a timely manner and quantifying improvements in everyday people's livelihood. In years past, the magazine has seen 27 different versions in 25 languages and been distributed in more than 100 countries and regions. In 1972 alone, over 1 million copies of each issue were printed, a Chinese periodical record.

China Pictorial is particularly noteworthy as China's first photo-featured magazine targeting a worldwide audience and the first to invest in color film and printing. Not surprisingly, the publication has produced a great number of noted and accomplished photojournalists over the years, who have helped provide decades of consistently stunning images. All of these factors have combined to make *China Pictorial* not only a major contributor in recording modern China's history, but also a living legacy of the Chinese publishing industry.



Cover Models

Text by Li Shuya

A Chinese proverb goes that "women hold up half the sky." But not until the 20th century have women across the globe begun to enjoy any modicum of equality. In the early years of the People's Republic, Chinese leaders knew that the strength of their women was essential to the nation's success and gender equality in China progressed exponentially. Many females have graced the cover of *China Pictorial* over the years, and the images through the decades serve as telling symbols of each era. The five women featured in this issue each achieved exceptional accomplishments, and they provide a fascinating way to view the progress of Chinese women since the founding of New China.

Qin Guifang: China's First Female Pilot

March 1958 Cover

Qin Guifang, China's first female pilot.

When re-interviewed by *China Pictorial*, Qin Guifang, who appeared on the cover of *CP*'s March 1958 issue as the country's first female aircraft captain, left reporters with a warm impression of humility, despite the glory she achieved by independently piloting a plane across most of China.

In November 1951, Qin graduated from flight school along with 13 others in China's first group of female pilots. On March 8, 1952, she and her peers piloted six Li-2 transport aircraft in a stunning performance over Tian'anmen Square to the delight of more than 7,000 delegates of the National Women's Congress and more than 50 wives of foreign ambassadors and consuls, as well as journalists from China and overseas. After the demonstration, the trailblazing women were congratulated by Mao Zedong and other state leaders.

Along with emergency tasks such as disaster relief air drops, Qin's most frequent missions involved transporting important government officials of all levels, which led her to soar above almost the entire mainland. Most missions were confidential, so she often received a flight plan only hours before departure, and returned it immediately after completion. She wasn't allowed to reveal anything about her tasks, even to her family.

Qin's flight record remained perfect throughout her career, and she only twice experienced close calls. Once, while transporting 14 provincial leaders from Beijing to Yan'an, Shaanxi Province, her plane narrowly missed a mountaintop, but ultimately avoided incident.

Since retirement, Qin has been living in Guangzhou.

Later, in 1958, she carried top secret orders from Chairman Mao related to bombarding Kinmin, which was an island occupied by Kuomingtang troops. While en route to Fujian, she encountered severe thunderstorms, so harsh that normal protocol would dictate turning around or making an emergency landing. However, Qin, who was aware of the significance of her mission, opted to take her chances. Thanks to her superb flying skill, she was able to skim the edge of the clouds and avoid the worst of the weather, and the orders arrived on time.

Since retirement, Qin has been living in Guangzhou with her husband. When asked about contributing factors to her success as a pilot, she referred to a change in disposition. "That profession can be risky and dangerous," she explains. "Whether male or female, a pilot must not only juggle knowledge of climate, navigation, and telecommunications, but at the same time remain calm, in control, and flexible during a mission."

Xing Yanzi: A Model 'Educated Youth'

Late 1960 and September 1976 Covers

Xing Yanzi, an icon of Chinese youth in the 1960s.

Xing was catapulted into the national spotlight due to her down-to-earth methods, and became the icon of an era. She was considered an exemplary model of "educated urban youth" for her agricultural work in the countryside. Xing met Mao Zedong on five different occasions, and at the height of her fame, she held 16 official titles, including member of the CPC Central Committee and deputy secretary of the Municipal Party Committee of Tianjin. Recently, she remarked in an interview with *CP* reporters, "I am only a farmer," continuing to display quiet pride balanced with humility.

In 1958, after graduating from middle school, 17-year-old Xing joined a movement of the era by returning to her ancestral origins in rural Tianjin despite her parents' opposition. Xing, now in her 60s, remembers her intentions like it was yesterday. "I never imagined becoming famous back then," she recalls, "but only wanted to respond to the nation's call to build the countryside. Also, I missed my grandfather, who lived in the countryside, and I personally love rural life."

Xing Yanzi shows a picture in which she shakes hands with Chairman Mao Zedong.

In the countryside, Xing led a team that reclaimed nearly 40 hectares of barren land. In winter, her team cut through thick ice covering a lake to enable fishing, and during evening hours, they wove door curtains from reeds. In only three months, the group produced 3,600 yuan for the village, making them the prototypical answer to officials' requests to "overcome adversity through greater production."

Her success was covered by *China Pictorial* and other media outlets in 1960, and Xing was quickly appointed to many official posts. However, rather than collecting a comfortable salary, this "high-ranking official" continued to make a living by earning work points in the production team. "When attending meetings in Beijing as a 'leader,' I was chauffeured around in a limousine," she smiles, "but back in the village, I worked in the fields like everyone else."

By the 1980s, Xing had gradually faded from the public eye. In 2001, she retired from her last official post with the government of Beichen District of Tianjin. "All those years in the countryside gave me a better feel for the world," she explains, "and now when I look back on my life, I am more than satisfied with all my experiences."

Ma Yanhong: China's First World Champion Gymnast

June 1980 Cover

Ma Yanhong, China's first world champion gymnast.

In modern China, it's virtually impossible to pass through a commercial area without seeing dozens of images of famous athletes – on billboards, television, clothing, and even food packaging. However, decades ago, sporting faces were not so common on magazine covers, especially those of females.

In 1979, 15-year-old Ma Yanhong traveled with the Chinese National Gymnastics team to Fort Worth, Texas, USA, for the World Championships. It was China's first international event after resuming its membership in the IOC. After two preliminary rounds, Ma was firmly in first place on the uneven bars, and in the final round, she continued her brisk, rhythmic performance to create graceful silhouettes as if dancing around the bars. After a slight misstep on her dismount, Ma finished in a tie for first place, and shared the gold medal with another competitor. This was China's first gold medal in an international women's gymnastics event. She pioneered an original dismount (a hecht-front salto-full), now known as the "Ma" – the first gymnastics move to carry a Chinese name.

Ma's victory was considered one of the defining moments of the era. American Chinese people were seen shedding tears and holding a banner that read "Thank you for the honor you won for all Chinese!" That moment, when Ma realized the significance of her accomplishments, remains fresh in her memory to this day.

Ma was born into a working-class Beijing family before being accepted to the Shichahai Sports School for Amateurs at the age of eight. From the moment she first tried the sport, she "loved it to death." Her techniques only improved since the groundbreaking gold medal, and at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, she managed a perfect 10 in the finals to become China's first Olympic gold medalist in gymnastics.

以超人的代价换取超人的

Ma Yanhong, now a manager of an advertising firm. by Liu Rong

After retiring from gymnastics, Ma completed her university education and spent time in both the UK and the United States. Today, she is the deputy manager of a Beijing-based advertising firm, and primarily organizes golf tournaments. The former world champion likens life to the uneven bars, noting the need to adapt to different roles. "Different stages of life require different priorities," she illustrates. "So, from time to time I must stop and contemplate what is most important to me at that moment."

Gong Li: Big Star

January 1993 Cover

Gong Li became CP's cover girl because of her hit film, Red Sorghum.

In 1992, Gong Li won the Best Actress award at the Venice International Film Festival, to become the first Chinese actress to be so honored at an international event. She is considered by many in the West to be the "most beautiful woman in the Orient," and Chinese see her as the first film star to win international fame.

Gong's first hit film was Zhang Yimou's directorial

Gong Li plays a mysterious lady in the film, Shanghai, *which hit China's screens in June 2010. CFP* debut, *Red Sorghum*, which was the first Chinese film to gain distribution in the United States. The film received mixed reviews from Chinese audiences, but Gong's performance glistened with unconstrained love and hate, repressed sexuality, and a fierce wild side that altered the traditional Western impression of Chinese women. In the years to follow, Gong starred in several more of Zhang's films such as *Ju Dou, Raise the Red Lantern, The Story of Qiu Ju, To Live,* and *Shanghai Triad*, which earned both critical and commercial success.

A few years ago, she revived her cooperation with director Zhang in the hit film *Curse of the Golden Flower* before heading to Hollywood to appear with Colin Farrell and Jamie Foxx in *Miami Vice. The New York Times* referred to Gong Li as a "goddess" of the international film community, noting that viewers tend to hang on her every word, even if they don't understand her language. Her latest film, *Shanghai,* co-stars Chow Yun-fat and John Cusack. The big-budget historical drama was co-produced by China's Huayi Brothers Media Group and America's Weinstein Company.

Gong Li was honored by the Chinese media as the only Chinese actress to ever serve on the jury of the world's three largest film festivals, and she has even presided over one. Her films have won top prizes at all three festivals, an unprecedented accomplishment in Chinese-language film circles. Gong Li is regarded as an iconic Chinese actress elevated to a global movie star. When Zhang Ziyi first jumped into the international spotlight over a decade ago, pundits quickly dubbed her "Little Gong Li."

Shen Jilan: Veteran "Congresswoman"

March 2003 Cover

人民画报
CHINA PICTORIAL
申纪兰
用半生见证中国民主进程

Shen Jilan, a witness of China's democratic development.

Shen Jilan, a farmer from an impoverished mountain area, is the only Chinese politician to serve as deputy to the National People's Congress for 11 consecutive terms.

In 1952, the 23-year-old Shanxi Province mountain villager visited every household in her village in an effort to mobilize women to work in the fields. Shen became a modern pioneer in the struggle for equal pay for equal work – regardless of gender – in China's rural areas. With her fellow villager Li Shunda, she co-founded an agricultural production cooperative society which earned them both titles of National Model Workers. In 1954, both were elected as deputies to the First NPC.

Shen traveled down the mountain on the back of a donkey and eventually arrived in Beijing to join 1,210 deputies to discuss and endorse the first constitution of the People's Republic of China as well as elect state leaders. When she met the nation's top leaders including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Liu Shaoqi, she was so excited that her eyes welled up with tears.

After China introduced the reform and opening-up policies, Shen established more than 10 enterprises in her hometown, which have succeeded in bringing more wealth to the villagers. During the Third Session of the 11th NPC held last March, the 81-year-old Shen exclaimed to the media, "Now the farmers all enjoy pension from the government, which was impossible for my grandparent's generation."

Shen Jilan personally witnessed much of the development of China's NPC system, and has even been praised as the world's most venerable congresswoman. She has met with top state leaders of every generation, from Mao Zedong to Hu Jintao. According to her, Mao liberated the Chinese people from imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, and Hu is leading the country towards increasing prosperity.

When asked whether she will remain an NPC deputy in the next term, Shen grinned. "That depends on the voting," she noted. "But whatever the results, I will continue to do my part for the country and the people as well."

September 1958: Premier Zhou Enlai with Shen Jilan (third from left) and other female model workers.

National Day Parades

Text by Wang Lei

"The Chinese people have stood up!"
Chairman Mao Zedong declared from atop the Tian'anmen Gate,
on October 1, 1949, marking the founding of the People's Republic of China.
Following his historic message to the world,
the People's Liberation Army (PLA) held a grand parade.

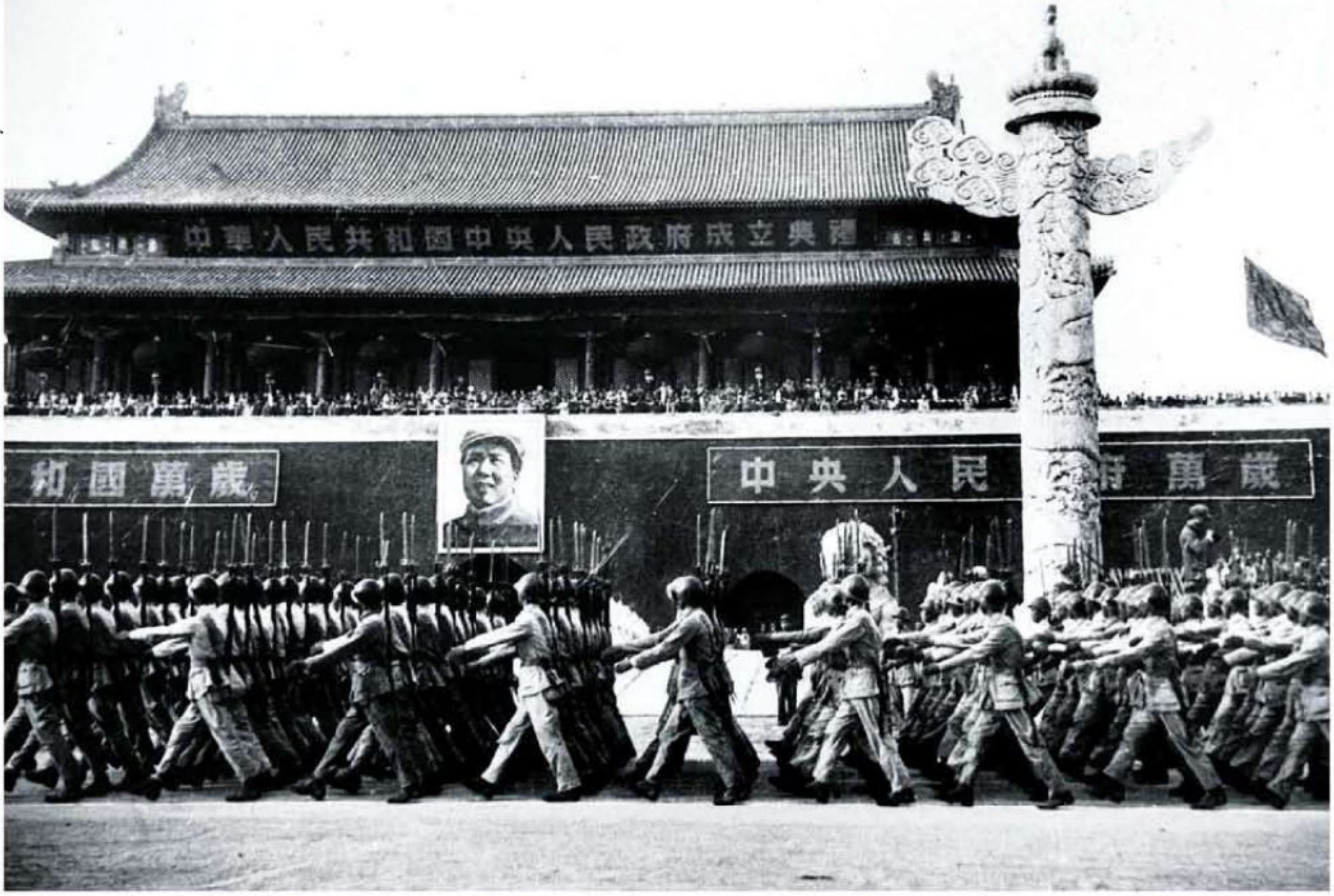
Since then, China has presented 14 military parades to celebrate the National Day, of which 11 were marched during the period from 1949 to 1959. "In the early years of New China, the country needed military parades to rally the public and intimidate its potential enemies," explains Jiang Tingyu, vice secretary-general of Chinese Military History Society.

The 1960s was a decade of economic turbulence in China, and because of budgetary limitations, the central government decided to organize the parades once a decade rather than annually. However, the hard times lasted even longer than expected, so the next National Day parade did not occur until 1984.

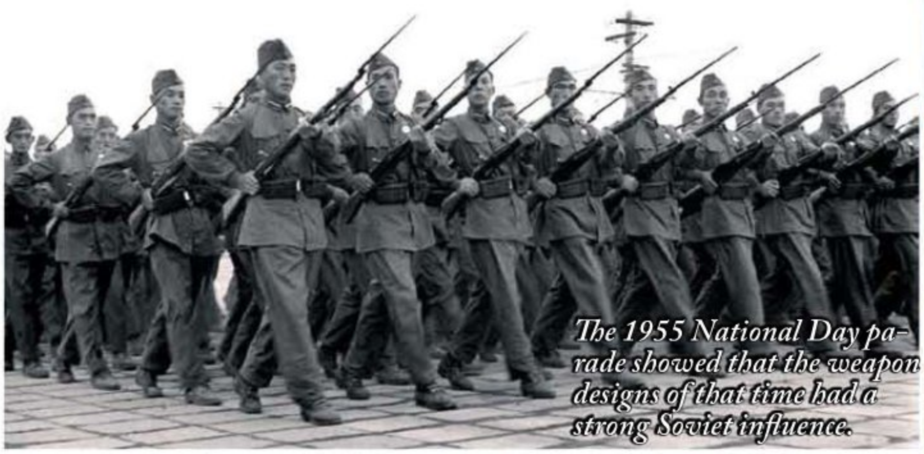
In 1981, Deng Xiaoping, now regarded as the "chief architect of China's reform and opening," asserted that "military parades are not a meaningless waste, but helpful in bolstering troop morale." So, for National Day of 1984, China finally organized another military parade after a 25-year hiatus. In the December issue of that year, *China Pictorial* devoted several pages to images from the parade.

Perhaps images of soldiers themselves have faded in the minds of those who witnessed the 1984 event. The startling image of some university students holding up a banner proved to be the most memorable occurrence. "Hello, Xiaoping!" read the banner that was carried in front of Tian'anmen Gate after the military parade.

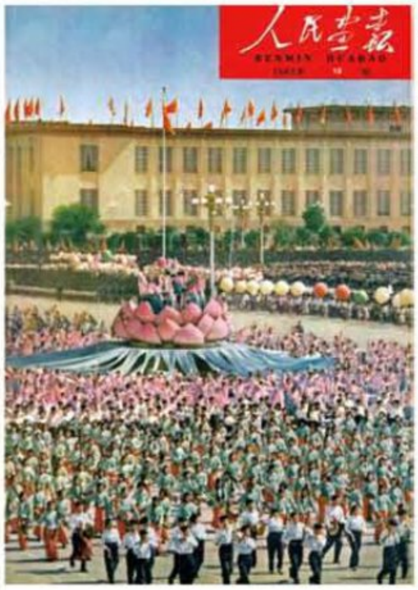
When Zhang Zhi and his Peking University schoolmates conceived the idea of greeting Deng in this manner, they had no idea they were creating a timeless historic moment. It was not only the first "unauthorized" banner to gain wide exposure at a National Day parade, but unheard of to greet one of the country's top officials in such an informal way. Years later, media organizations were still discussing the occurrence, and remarked that the banner "was symbolic of China's reform and opening up. It was unimaginable for Chinese people to do such a thing back then. However, those students not only avoided punishment, but were celebrated for their brave act."


中華人民共和國中央人民政府成立典禮
和國萬歲
中央人民政府萬歲

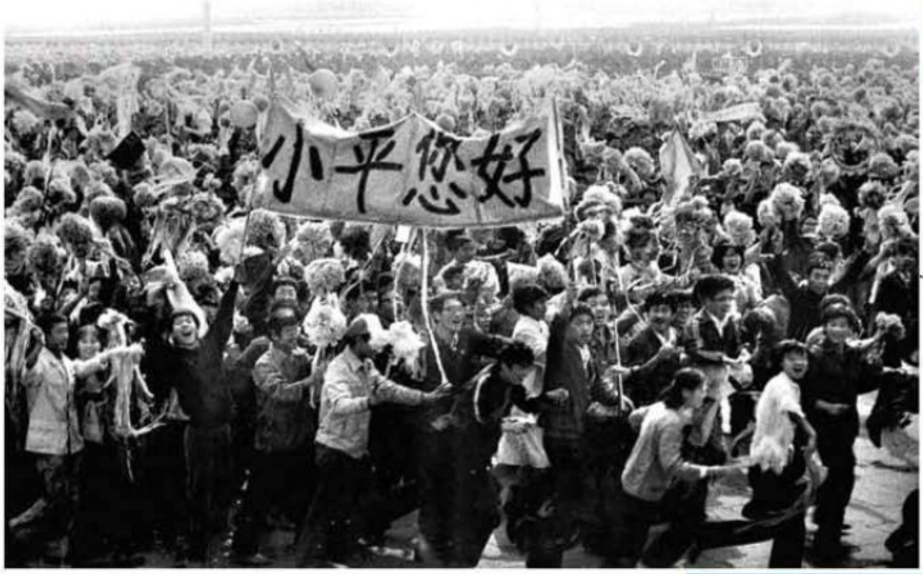
The first military parade, held in 1949, celebrated the founding of the People's Republic of China.



The 1955 National Day parade showed that the weapon designs of that time had a strong Soviet influence.



A photo depicting the 1960 National Day parade graced the cover of China Pictorial.



During the 1984 National Day parade, students from Peking University unfurled a banner that read "Hello, Xiaoping!"

In 1984, Tian'anmen Square was crowded with people celebrating China's 35th National Day.

To celebrate China's 60th National Day in 2009, a 14th military parade was organized. The landmark parade set several national records. It surpassed every previous one in number of participating formations, weapons displayed, and new technology.

"China's military forces have evolved from an era of cattle-drawn weapons, to motorization and mechanization, to artificial intelligence and unmanned drones," remarks Jiang. "The past 14 National Day military parades demonstrated the advancement of the Chinese army toward modernization."

The 2009 National Day parade. by Wang Lei

A Village's Four Decades

Text by Wang Lei

Dazhai was once just a nondescript village in Xiyang County, Shanxi Province. Then, in the 1950s, local villagers began to reclaim wasteland on the mountainsides, and local agricultural output witnessed sudden growth.

Over the next decade, impressive production figures continued, and in 1964, Chairman Mao Zedong began to notice. He published his supreme dictum, "Learn from Dazhai in agriculture," which elevated the village to a national agricultural model.

The same year, Guo Fenglian, head of the Dazhai "Team of Iron Girls" (a group of teenagers who devoted themselves to the village's development), also became a household name. *China Pictorial* published a series of photos to raise awareness of the Dazhai growth model.

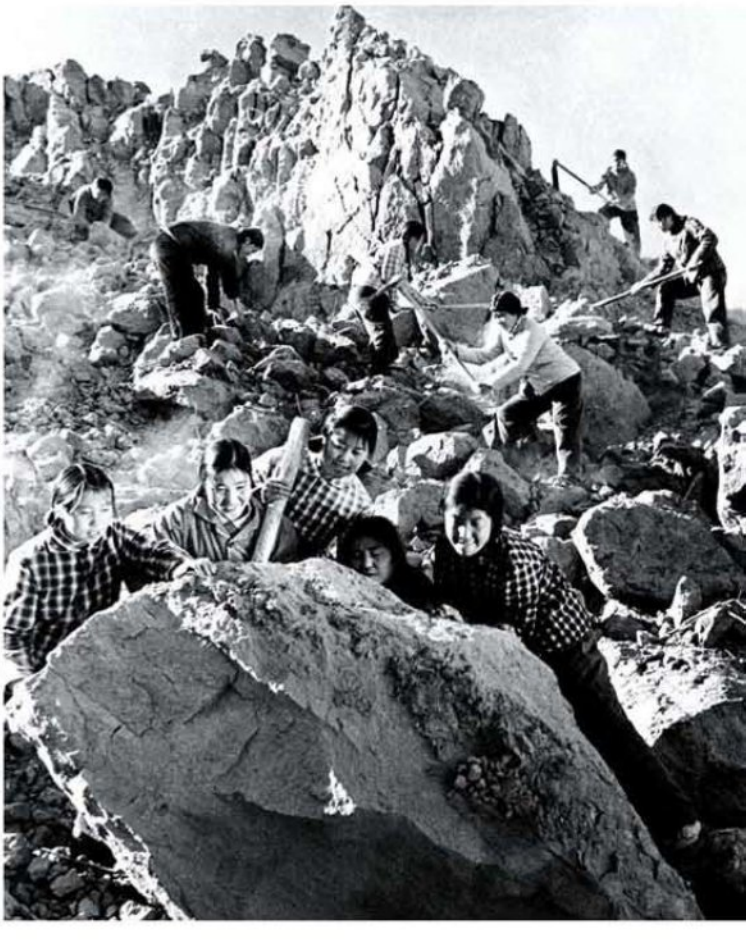
At the time, ordinary workers and farmers were considered the main forces in driving Chinese society forward. *China Pictorial* often chose such people, particularly those with outstanding achievements, for its cover photos. In 1966, Chen Yonggui, a farmer and also secretary of the Party committee of Dazhai, appeared on the front cover of the magazine's February issue. Nine years later, in 1975, Chen became vice premier of China. In 1976, *China Pictorial* featured his successor, Guo Fenglian, on the cover of the January issue.

At the end of the Cultural Revolution, the collective agriculture model that Dazhai represented was phased out. Xiaogang Village, which initiated the household contract responsibility system in China, became the new model for the nation's rural areas. Dazhai suffered a disastrous decline, and its name was seldom mentioned over the following decade.

In November 1991, Guo Fenglian once again became the secretary of the Party committee of Dazhai. She transformed the village from a "political model" to an "economic model" through developing industrial enterprises. Today, the village's leading business, Shanxi Dazhai Drinks Co., Ltd., is one of China's fastest-growing and most reputed beverage companies. Its main product, Dazhai Walnut Drink, has been acclaimed as the nation's leading walnut beverage.

Over the past four decades, Dazhai has mirrored the history of New China. Through *China Pictorial*'s reporting, readers can get a sense of the villagers' diligence, but also peek into the frenzied national campaign to "learn from Dazhai" during the Cultural Revolution period.

In 1964, Chairman Mao Zedong published his supreme dictum, "Learn from Dazhai in agriculture," which pronounced the village a national agricultural model.



Mountainside wasteland was converted into fertile cropland in Dazhai.

Dazhai people diligently made their hometown a better place.

Guo Fenglian, head of Dazhai's "Team of Iron Girls."

Guo Fenglian delivers a speech at a meeting of the National People's Congress.

The State of the Arts

Text by You Shanshan

Peking Opera has a storied history of more than 200 years, but perhaps has witnessed its most dramatic changes over the course of the past six decades, since the founding of New China. China Pictorial, a magazine as old as the nation it covers, provides a trail to follow the ups and downs of the opera over this turbulent period.

Peking Opera reached its zenith in the 1950-60s when many traditional operas were re-staged. *China Pictorial* featured many articles and photographs documenting the era. Mei Lanfang, a monumental figure in the history of Peking Opera, appeared frequently in the magazine. In 1961, he even graced the cover of *China Pictorial*'s August issue.

The Cultural Revolution, which broke out in the mid-1960s, wrought great destruction on traditional Chinese culture. Historical plays of Peking Opera were considered "feudalistic and bourgeois" and became forbidden. They were replaced by new creations with revolutionary subjects, collectively known as "revolutionary model operas." On stage, historical figures in traditional costumes were replaced by modern heroes and heroines meant to represent workers, peasants and soldiers. Chairman Mao Zedong enjoyed watching such operas, and his wife, Jiang Qing, personally oversaw their production. The plays were regarded as symbolic performances embodying the ideals of the Cultural Revolution.

In September 1965, *China Pictorial* covered the debut of the model opera, *The Legend of the Red Lantern*. A photograph depicting the female lead holding up a red lantern graced the issue's front cover, and the actress became an iconic image of that time.

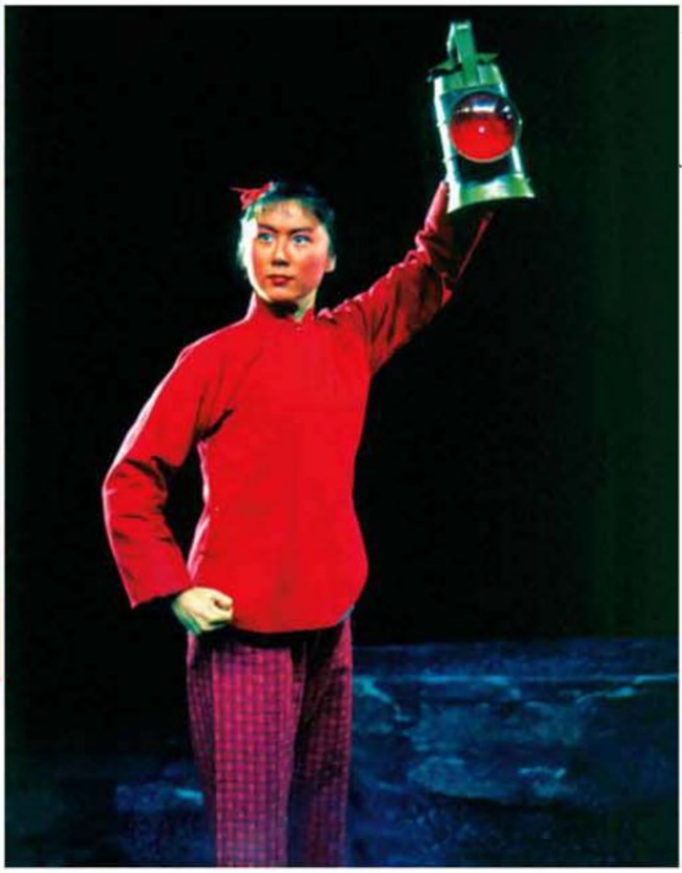
In 1979, the second year after China introduced its reform and opening-up policy, *China Pictorial* published stills from the traditional Peking opera, *Zhaojun Goes Beyond the Great Wall*, in its November issue. In the 1990s, Peking Opera began to be recognized as a valuable national cultural heritage, and in 1991, the Seminar on the Rejuvenation of Peking Opera was held in Beijing. In its April issue of the year, *China Pictorial* covered the seminar with a feature story titled "A Grand Festival of Peking Opera," accompanied by a photograph of Jiang Zemin watching a performance.

Peking Opera has thus regained its position as one of the most important symbols of traditional culture in today's China. Some say it is difficult to experience China fully without sitting at an "eight-immortal table" (an old-fashioned square table) in an atmospheric theater and taking in a performance over tea and snacks. Occasionally, patrons are even allowed to watch actors and actresses prepare backstage.

Peking Opera is increasingly facing challenges from pop culture, but experts think it can still endure. It remains a very popular photography subject, and therefore maintains a media presence. It is also being offered as an optional course in some primary and middle schools. *China Pictorial* covered this phenomenon several times over the years. In a world of dazzling movies and fashion-conscious pop entertainment, traditional culture can often seem cut adrift. Peking Opera must find a way to connect with the youth of today.

1963: Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai takes a photo with Zhang Junqiu (center), a noted Peking Opera artist, after a performance.

A still from the modern revolutionary opera, Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy. ***by Li Lanying***



A still from The Legend of the Red Lantern, *published in the September 1965 issue of* China Pictorial. *Li Tiemei, the leading female role in the play, became an iconic image of that era.* ***by Chang Suqin***

A still from The Drunken Concubine, *in which Peking Opera artist Du Jinfang played imperial mistress Yang Yuhuan.* ***by Wu Yinbo***

Peking Opera used to be a popular pastime for ordinary people in old Beijing. Today, the traditional art still has many fans. Pictured are Peking Opera amateurs performing under the shade near a watchtower of the Forbidden City. ***by Yu Pengfei and Wang De***

National Pastime

Text by You Shanshan

A rectangular slab of cement supported by bricks,
divided by a makeshift net, can serve as a ping pong table.
In the 1950s and 60s,
such simple sporting tables could be found at schools, factories,
and residential areas throughout China. In those years,
table tennis was a popular evening pastime after work or dinner.

Photos depicting children playing ping pong on simple tables were frequently published in *China Pictorial* in the early decades of the magazine. Because of its gentle learning curve, little strength requirement, and modestly-priced equipment, the game's popularity in China grew exponentially after its introduction, so much so that it has been deemed the country's national game.

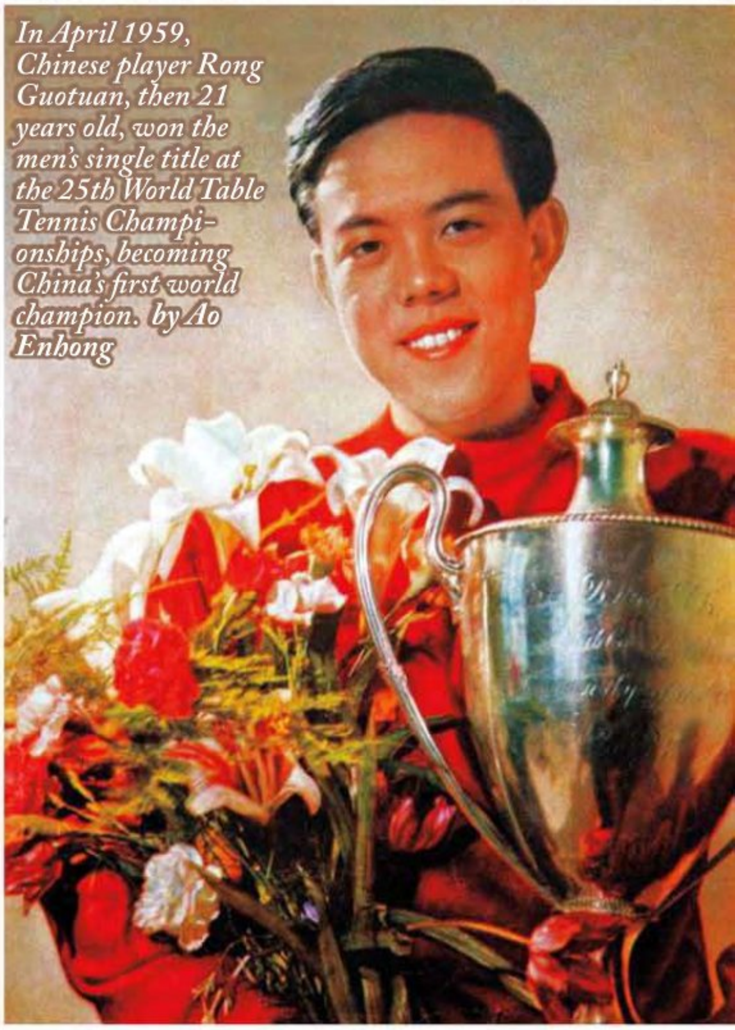
In the November 1952 issue, *China Pictorial* covered China's first National Table Tennis Championships after the founding of the People's Republic. From October 12 to 16, 1952, a total of 66 players competed in 236 matches. By 1958, the participant count surpassed 300.

In 1959, Rong Guotuan became the first Chinese player to win the world championship, held that year in Dortmund, Germany. When China's delegation returned from the competition, state leaders including Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai personally welcomed them. Premier Zhou proclaimed that along with the 10th National Day celebration, Rong's victory was one of the "two most delightful events of the year." Inspired by Zhou's words, China's first domestic brand of ping pong equipment was named "Double Happiness." Also in that year, the May Day holiday was celebrated with thousands of table tennis players parading down the avenue in front of the Tian'anmen Gate, performing a variety of ping pong techniques. An epidemic of table tennis fever quickly spread across the nation. A photo depicting Rong holding the championship trophy and a bouquet graced the cover of *China Pictorial*'s June 1959 issue.

In those days, many children's dream was to own a Double Happiness ping pong paddle, but they had to save their tiny allowance from their parents for a long while to afford such a paddle.

As the past four decades unfolded, table tennis retained its position as the national game of China. Chinese players have revolutionized the sport in world-class competitions. For instance, Deng Yaping captured 18 world championship titles in only eight years, which placed her amongst the nation's most successful athletes. When China opened her doors to more foreign cultural diversity, a plethora of new sports began finding a following in China. With this ever-increasing competition, it is debatable whether table tennis can continue its domination of Chinese sport – as much as Chinese players dominate the world's ping pong competitions.

1961: People queue up to buy tickets for the 26th World Table Tennis Championships. by Ao Enhong



In April 1959, Chinese player Rong Guotuan, then 21 years old, won the men's single title at the 25th World Table Tennis Championships, becoming China's first world champion. by Ao Enhong

中美乒乓外交三十五周年纪念

In the spring of 1971, prior to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, the US Table Tennis Team was invited to attend a ping pong invitational in China, signaling the beginning of bilateral contact. Thirty-five years later, Chinese and US players attend a reunion event in China. ***by Wang Weijiang***

Local farmers in Du'an Yao Autonomous County, Guangxi, play on a homemade ping pong table. ***by Zheng Changlu***

On July 31, 1996, Juan Antonio Samaranch, then president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), presented a gold medal to Chinese ping pong player Deng Yaping at the Atlanta Olympics. Samaranch praised Deng as "fully demonstrating the Olympic motto of higher, faster, and stronger." ***by Xu Bu***

Text by Wang Lei

A Country on Wheels

Almost every morning, Zhang Wuchang, 68, watches from his balcony as his son drives his grandson to school. The highlight of his day is seeing his grandson roll down the car window to wave to him.

"I used to take my son to school when he was a child," Zhang recalls, "but I rode a bicycle. In those days, bicycles far outnumbered cars on Beijing's streets. Now, the situation is reversed: cars have taken over the roads."

The first Chinese-made car came off the assembly line over 50 years ago. In 1958, China's First Automobile Works (FAW) produced the nation's first Red Flag limousine, which was modeled after an imported 1955 Chrysler sedan. The company borrowed the Chrysler from Jilin University of Technology and incorporated several Chinese elements in their design. In September of that year, *China Pictorial* covered Red Flag's Beijing debut.

However, due to the country's shortage of steel and lack of industrial design capabilities at the time, China's auto industry remained underdeveloped in the following two decades. Only a few domestic cars were on the roads, such as the Red Flag sedans, which were used only for high-ranking officials, and some Shanghai-brand vehicles that few were able to afford. In fact, from the 1960s to the 80s, the Shanghai sedan was the only mass-produced model in China.

November 25, 1991, marked the end of an era, when, at 2:30 p.m., the last Shanghai car rolled off the line of the Shanghai Automobile Plant, which then shifted its resources to producing the Santana in cooperation with Volkswagen of Germany. Since then, foreign automakers have flooded into China, eager to take advantage of the potential Chinese market. The joint ventures produced more affordable vehicles that enabled thousands of Chinese people to realize the once lofty dream of owning an automobile, but snatched a massive piece of the Chinese market from domestic automakers.

Since 2001, China's private auto industry has seen exponential growth. After its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December of that year, China further opened its auto market. The industry has enjoyed a boom characterized by increasingly diverse models and declining prices. The newfound purchasing ability of private buyers has contributed to the majority of the growth, which has provided domestic manufacturers with the opportunity to expand their market share.

According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, China had 5.54 million cars on the road in 1990, of which 14.8 percent were privately owned. The latest statistics from the country's public security department report that the vehicle count has now passed 76 million. In Beijing alone, the vehicle count increases by 10,000 every week. The staggering numbers evidence modern China's love affair with the automobile. But, of course, the surging automobile count is causing new problems such as traffic jams and air pollution. Since the 2008 Olympics, Beijing has enacted a vehicle restriction rule, which bans private cars from the city proper on one specific weekday according to the last number of their license plate. Zhang Xiaoyu, vice president of the China Machinery Industry Federation, is aware that the rise of Chinese automobiles poses new challenges. "Environmental protection and energy conservation are two key issues China must tackle along the road to becoming both the world's biggest auto producer and consumer," he remarks.

August 21, 1956: The first batch of 38 "Jiefang" trucks, produced by FAW, are displayed at Tian'anmen Square.

1958: The Sri Lankan ambassador tries out a Chinese-made Red Flag sedan.

1992: A production line for "Xiali" cars at Tianjin FAW Small Automobile Plant.

G103
二环路
2nd Ring Rd 2km
(建国门桥)

2010: Rush hour in Beijing.

History in Pictures

This year marks the 60th birthday of China Pictorial. Over the last six decades, the magazine has documented the impressive changes in China with timely photos of the country and her people. Every click of the camera tells an extraordinary story.

人民画报 China Pictorial

Covering Conflicts

For photojournalists, images of war have always been highly valuable, but challenging material. Over the past 60 years, China has endured regional conflicts, such as the Korean War (1950-53), the Sino-Soviet border conflict (1969), and the Sino-Vietnamese War (1979), which have all been recorded by photographers from *China Pictorial.*

Chinese soldiers with a Korean family. On June 25, 1950, a war broke out on the Korea Peninsula. In late June 1951, Cai Shangxiong from China Pictorial *covered the story of the Korean armistice negotiations in Panmunjom. On his way, the vehicle was overturned. He and his party had to walk five miles until they reached a farm house, where the elderly hostess offered her children's clothes for them to change into. Unfortunately, few rolls of film were saved from the accident.*

In March 1969, Zhenbao (Treasure) Island, located on the Chinese side of the Wusuli River in Heilongjiang Province, became famous when war broke out due to a boundary dispute between China and the former Soviet Union. Shen Jun from China Pictorial *covered the struggles and living conditions of Chinese frontier soldiers on the island.*

"Secret" Revealed

In the 1960s, Japan kept an eye on petroleum development in China. They learned about the discovery of the Daqing Oilfield but could get little accurate information. They happened upon a report in *China Pictorial,* which was meant to showcase the spirit of the Chinese working class, but ultimately served as a vitally important source for information that Japanese specialists had been searching for.

Using China Pictorial, *the Japanese examined a photo of the reaction tower in a refinery, and from the diameter of the pipeline they calculated the production scale and capacity of the Daqing Oil Refinery. They then designed fitting equipment for oil recovery, preparing to win the bid in the days to come. The Nippon Foundation finally got a big-ticket order from China.*

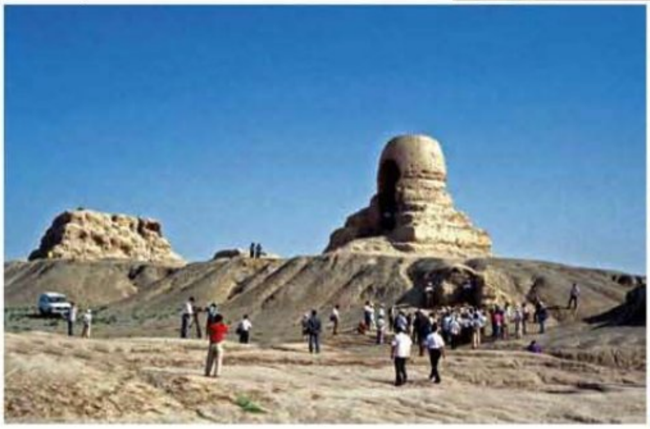
In the July 1966 issue of China Pictorial, *the Japanese saw a photo depicting Wang Jinxi, dubbed "Iron Man," in thick cotton coat, wearing a fur cap. He handled the brake crank of a drilling machine, in heavy snow, looking into the distance, with a backdrop of derricks, tall and big, scattered around. Solely by examining the weather and the dress of Wang, the Japanese were able to guess the location of the oilfield – somewhere in the extremely cold northern part of Northeast China.*

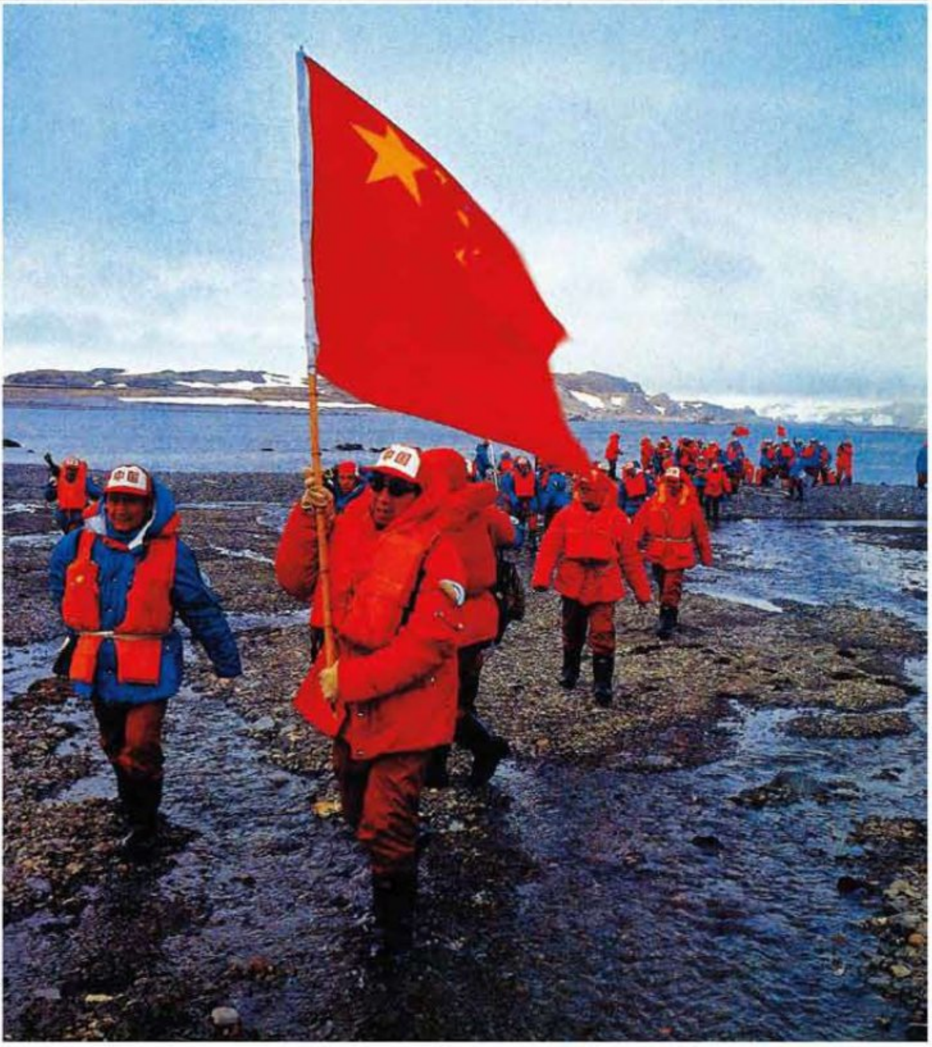
Reporting Scientific Expeditions

Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policies in 1978, China has witnessed progress at full speed, particularly in science, technology, culture, and education. The government launched a series of important scientific investigations, involving reporters from *China Pictorial,* who provided considerable precious first-hand photographic data, a valuable source for later assignments related to scientific expeditions in the country.

In 1989, Du Zequan from China Pictorial *joined a team of scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences on an expedition prior to a geological survey of the untouched Hoh Xil. The four-month painstaking survey in the hinterland of Hoh Xil, some 5,000 meters above sea level, resulted in tremendously valuable data which eventually contributed to the drawing of boundaries of the Hoh Xil Nature Reserve.*

In 1988, UNESCO launched a campaign to investigate the entire length of the Silk Road. Sun Yifu from China Pictorial *was invited to be part of the team. The journey started in Venice, Italy, before passing through more than 10 countries, finally ending in Osaka, Japan. As soon as he returned to Beijing, Sun began to edit a large-format picture album,* From Venice to Osaka.





In 1984, Sun Zhijiang from China Pictorial *joined China's first Antarctic expedition. During the journey on the South Pacific Ocean, the team encountered extreme weather, which severely damaged the ship. The hatch cover of the 25-ton crane at the stern was thrown into the ocean, and the steel plate of the bulkhead along the ship board was torn open. Despite the tough circumstances, Sun successfully accomplished his mission and returned home safely.*

A Cornerstone of Culture

Text and photographs by Wan Quan

Its breathtaking natural beauty is indisputable, but Huangshan City sets itself apart from China's countless scenic spots with an abundance of history and culture. The city is home to Huangshan Mountain Scenic Spot, Taiping Lake, and Qiyun Mountain, which is considered one of China's four major Taoist shrines. With its incredible variety of natural and historic attractions, Huangshan City is a no-brainer vacation choice for travel enthusiasts looking to escape for a weekend. In recent years, Huangshan has been widely praised as a charming and livable city.

Ancient Tunxi Street.

Along with its stunning landscapes, Huangshan City is celebrated for its historical legacy. The area was once a hub of cultural development and commerce, historically known as "Huizhou." It had a wide reputation for its love of business, opera, cuisine, and high-end culture.

According to historical records, ancient Huizhou was home to an unusually high concentration of talent. During periods of war, talented generals able to bring stability found a spotlight in the Huizhou region. The *Chinese Famous People Dictionary* includes over 40,000 notable names from throughout history, and more than 800 of them hail from Huizhou.

So it's no surprise that Huangshan features an abundance of cultural relics to complement its lengthy history. It has even been dubbed a "sea of cultural relics." The area includes 12 state-level historical and cultural towns, villages, and streets, 17 historical and cultural relics under state protection, and 13,438 noted pieces of architectural heritage. Ancient bridges, pagodas, pavilions, temples, and archways constructed by ancient Huizhou businessmen still abound in Huangshan City, making it a natural history museum. It is possible to imagine that every slab of stone in the city has stories to tell. One historian declared that to witness the lifestyles of Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) emperors, tourists should visit Beijing, but to experience the life of the ordinary folk in those days, one must visit Huizhou.

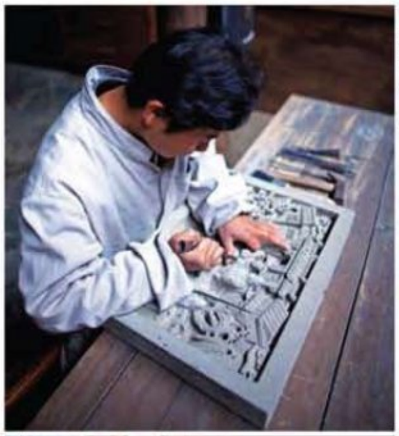
Ancient Tunxi Street in downtown Huangshan is a well-preserved commercial pedestrian thoroughfare decorated with architecture from the Song (960-1279), Ming, and Qing dynasties. Narrow and deep, the pathway is paved with maroon stone slabs. Shops along the street are built of wood and bricks, with window and door frames decorated with intricate carvings. High walls separate neighboring houses, which is a unique characteristic of Huizhou architectural style. The main street is intersected by winding alleys that resemble fish bones when viewed from above.

Currently, many ancient businesses on the street have been restored, such as *Tongderen*, a pharmacy built in 1863. Two lanes just off the main road were established to sell antiques and the Four Treasures of Study (writing brush, paper, ink stick, and ink slab). In addition, also found on the ancient street are traditional Huizhou paintings, printed pictures, rubbings from stone inscriptions, and bonsais.

The most well-preserved local traditional handicraft is probably a bamboo carving technique. However, modern technology enables manufacturers to imitate traditional carving with lasers. A wide variety of products feature artistic renderings of local places of interest, landscapes, and traditional Chinese myths, gracing items

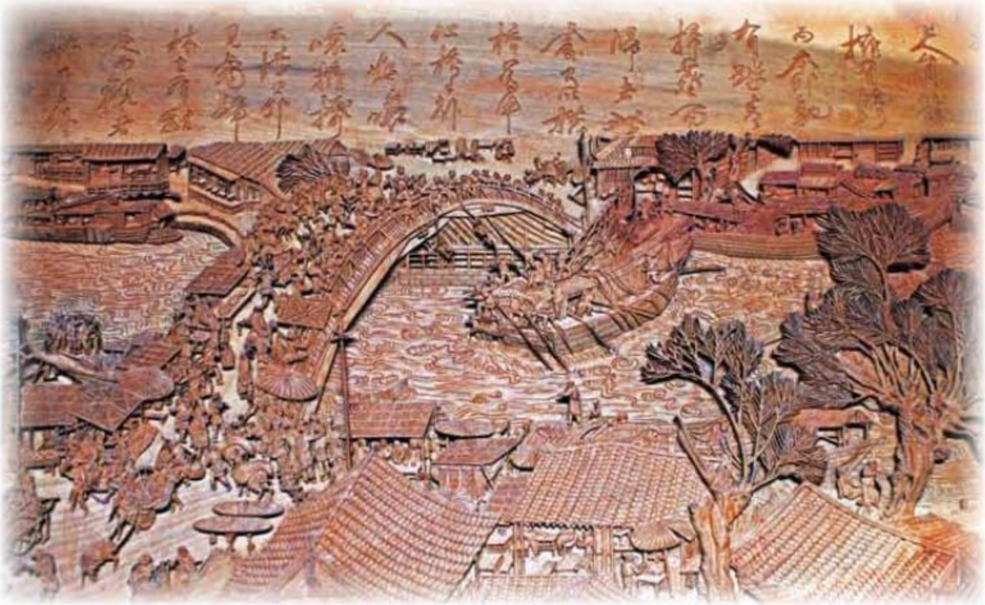
such as paintings, calendars, bamboo screens, and bamboo root carvings.

In order to better protect its traditional cultural relics, Huangshan City recently applied for national intangible cultural heritage status for its brick, stone, and wood carvings, manufacturing of Huizhou ink, and local opera. Huangshan now has 15 items on the heritage list along with 11 representative inheritors. Production of Huizhou ink has even been submitted to the World Intangible Cultural Heritage List. Due to its abundant cultural heritage, the Chinese Ministry of Culture designated the city as the nucleus of the Huizhou cultural protection trial zone.



Huizhou architecture features delicately carved bricks.

Production of Huizhou ink is currently being considered for the World Intangible Cultural Heritage List.



A bamboo carving titled Riverside Scene at the Tomb-sweeping Festival.

Hu Wenguang Memorial Archway at the entrance of Xidi. by Wan Quan

If It Ain't Broke…

Text by Zhao Yue
Photographs by Wang Lei

With the hum of a Huangmei Opera radio broadcast soothing our ears, the drive to Yixian County of Anhui Province was relaxing. Our destination was Xidi and Hongcun, two small villages historically part of Huizhou, the hub of commerce in southern China in ancient times.

Transportation links around Huangshan Mountain, which connect the adjacent Yixian to the outside world, were underdeveloped for centuries, so the land evolved into a place of pastoral beauty. In 1999, Xidi and Hongcun were included on the list of World Cultural Heritage sites by UNESCO. National Geographic once described world heritage sites as "the most precious places on the planet" and the "best of the best." Those lucky enough to visit the places on the list are usually stricken with conflicting admiration, wanting to share the experience with the world, while hoping that such places remain untouched by the forces of modernization.

Overlooking Xidi.

Xidi

Careful preparation is essential when traveling to a faraway destination. The well-known travel guide, *Lonely Planet*, has long been considered the international backpackers bible. *The Handbook of Tibetan Antelope* is considered by many to be China's very own version.

"Constructed during Emperor Renzong's reign (1049-1054) of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), Xidi boasts a history of 930 years. The flat surface of the village resembles the shape of a boat, with the memorial archway at the village entrance as the sail, the gingko tree at the west end of the village as the mast, and the residential houses as the hull. Xidi now boasts more than 300 structures in Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) style." — *The Handbook of Tibetan Antelope*

Dense fog in the mountainous area often envelops the whole village, leaving Xidi in twilight tranquility. Two rivers that flow through the village from east to west give the village its name, which literally translates as "passing to the west."

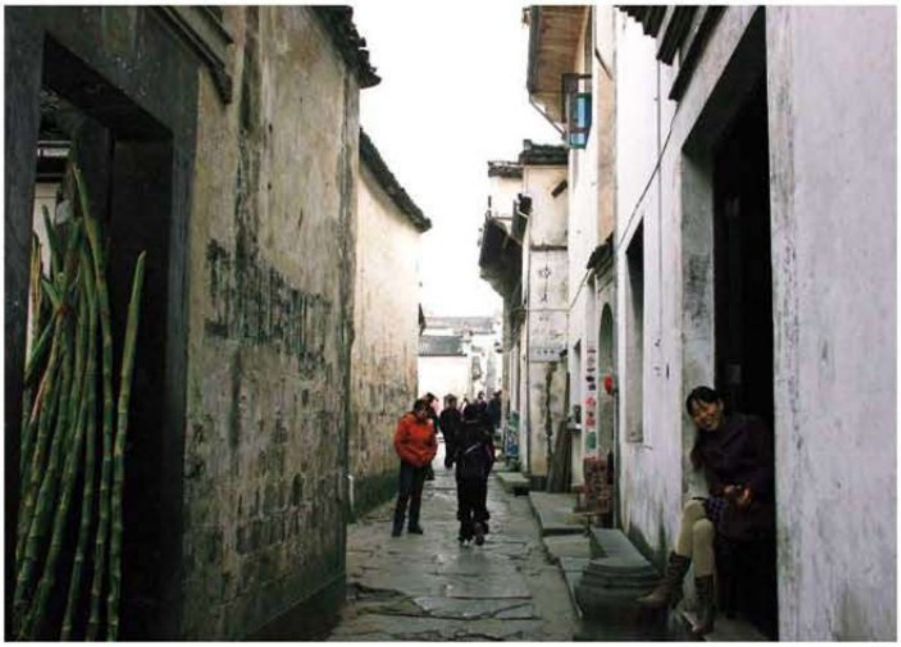
Historical records show that the founding father of Xidi was the son of Emperor Zhaozong of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Due to a rebellion at the royal court, the prince fled the capital and changed his surname to Hu. He settled in a place that gradually developed into a flourishing village. Because of their respect for all living things and the philosophy of unity between man and nature, the Hu clan chose to settle in a location with good air quality, an agreeable climate, and a beautiful landscape. Their structures were designed to complement the local geography, which resulted in the boat shape. Through the generations, many locals traveled elsewhere to study and earn money while in their youth, returning years later to build a house in their hometown. Their efforts and business savvy resulted in Xidi becoming what it is today: a treasure trove of ancient residential abodes.

The small village reflects the wisdom of ancient Chinese people. Hu Wenguang Memorial Archway, towering at the village entrance, was constructed by imperial decree in 1578. Composed of black marble, the archway is visually spectacular, as is another of Xidi's architectural gems: the gate tower. The Ming Dynasty enacted strict laws on residential land usage, so common people constructed elaborate gate towers instead of extravagant homes. In Xidi, Yingfu Hall is considered to have the most exquisite gate tower.

When entering ancient homes, visitors find that most windows are small and hallways dimly lit. Historians assert that Anhui businessmen chose such designs to hide their wealth. Supporting this hypothesis, a trip to the backyard provides an entirely different scene. Structures of brick and wood surround an open-air courtyard with superb ventilation and natural light, while water drains away.

A stroll through Xidi usually provides a few pleasant surprises. At corners of alleys, the walls are indented, which not only provides convenience for pedestrians and vehicles, but is also considered virtuous for designers.

In Xidi, ancestral temples stand taller than ordinary houses. In the past, these large and elegant temples were symbols of wealth, power and glory, and today they are all open to tourist visits.



A zigzagging path.

The picturesque Xidi and Hongcun attract large numbers of art school students practicing painting and sketching.

Hongcun

"Hongcun was built in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), more than 800 years ago. Erected by the water to conform with the rivers, Hongcun is home to more than 100 well-preserved delicate residential houses. The harmonious co-existence of nature and people makes Hongcun known as 'a village in painting.'" — *The Handbook of Tibetan Antelope*

Hongcun is only about 10 kilometers from Xidi. The village shape bears a passing resemblance to an ox, and was constructed according to bionics principles for better irrigation and fire prevention. The villager's houses form the ox's body, the Leigang Mountain is the head, two towering trees at the village entrance are horns, and four bridges serve as the ox's legs. The rivers meet to form a lake in the south of the village, known as Nanhu, meaning Southern Lake, which is the most picturesque spot in Hongcun.

In terms of ancient architecture preservation, Hongcun ranks among the best villages in China. Almost all residential houses – mansions of rich businessmen, villas of silk merchants, courtyards of school teachers, officials' residences, ancestral halls of local prestigious families, and even ordinary people's cabins – look the same as they did centuries ago. From the outside, it is often hard to tell which structures are grand and which are humble.

In ancient Hongcun, the Wang Family was the most powerful and influential. Chengzhi Hall, the most well-known structure in the village, was once the residence of Wang Dinggui, a wealthy salt merchant in the late Qing Dynasty. The luxurious mansion was used as a location in Ang Lee's Oscar-winning film, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

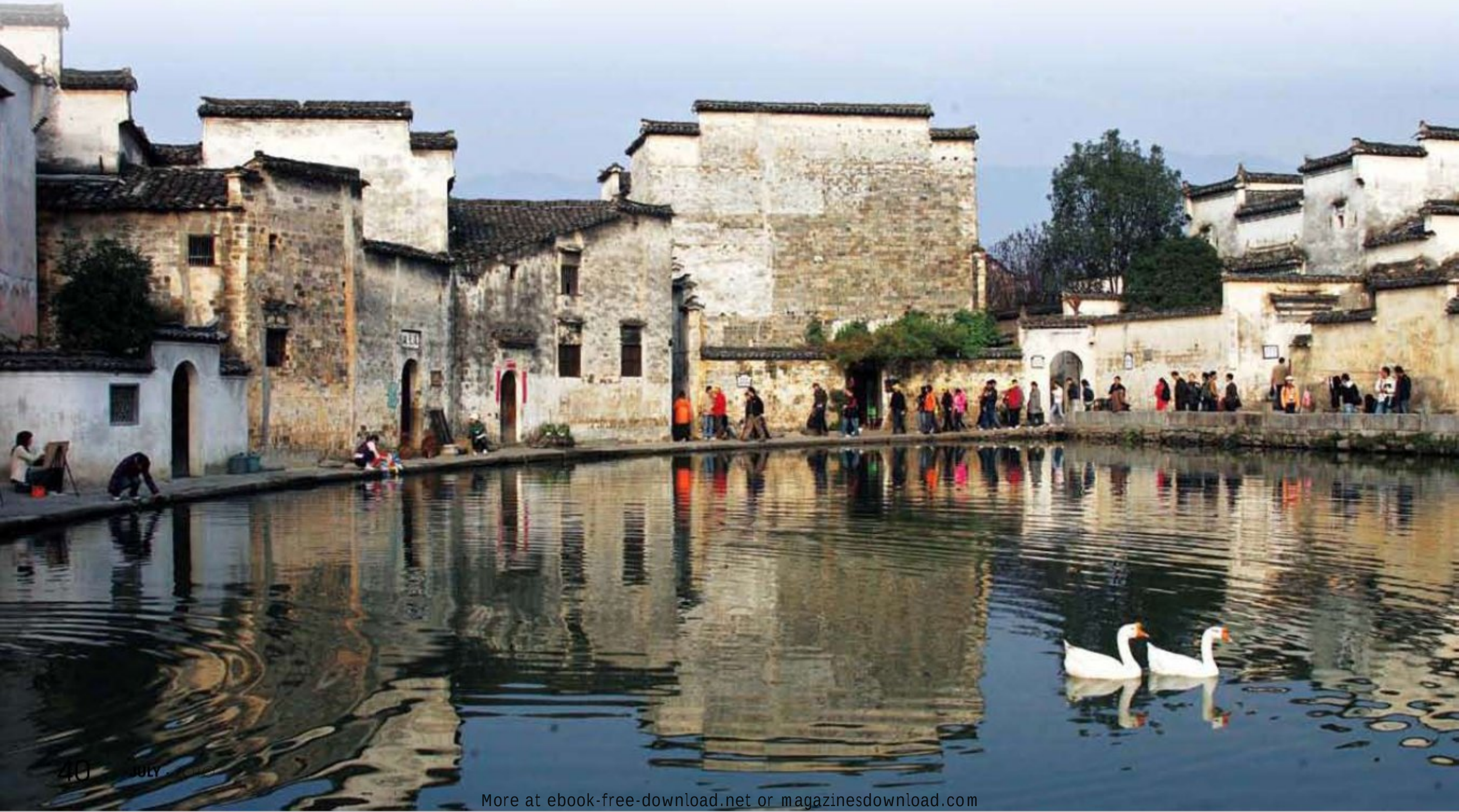
The ox shape is the highlight of Hongcun. This layout originates from feng shui theory, using the laws of both astronomy and geography to form a harmonious co-existence between residents and the environment. Locals describe walking through Hongcun by water channels as like "walking in the body of an ox."

Starting from the parking lot entrance, the first sight is Nanhu Lake, the ox's abdomen. It is shaped like a bow, and visitors must cross an arrow-shaped hump bridge to enter the village.

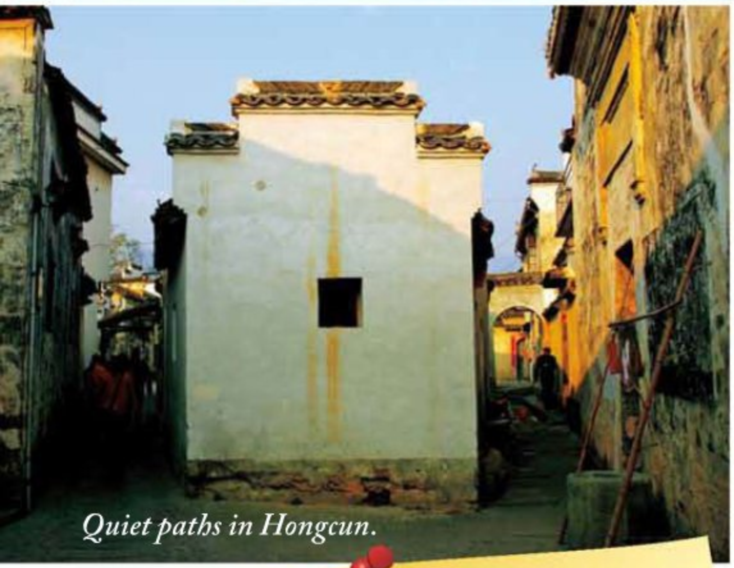
Walking upstream along a mountain spring, visitors soon reach Crescent Pond. A story about the pond dates back to 1407 when villagers decided to create it from a natural spring cave. Most villagers agreed to make the pond the circular shape of a full moon, but Hu Zhongniang, a local housewife, objected. She argued that since the moon waxes only to wane and water surges only to overflow, the optimum time in a cycle is just before the climax. The woman could have never imagined that her reasoning would result in a pond that has been celebrated for its aesthetics and practicality so many centuries later. To this day, many painters and art students love to use the pond for landscapes.

At the other end of the village, visitors can easily find the ox horns – two massive trees which are both more than 400 years old. Villagers enjoy relaxing in their shade while chatting with neighbors.

The Crescent Pond, located at the center of Hongcun.



Picturesque Hongcun.


Quiet paths in Hongcun.

Living Heritage

Today, ancient maxims to inspire youngsters towards a brighter future are still conspicuously displayed on houses. Ancestors of Xidi and Hongcun passed down their wisdom long ago, and it has been well preserved to this day.

After being included amongst "the best of the best," Xidi and Hongcun, tranquil for the past few centuries, have gradually attracted more attention as their names have gained greater fame throughout the world. Along with the huge social and economic benefits of being listed as World Cultural Heritage sites, residents are realizing that with great honor comes great responsibility.

Shouldering this responsibility, Xidi and Hongcun have been well preserved as China's traditional rural life has disappeared in many areas of the country. The Crescent Pond and the ancient structures remain, as each human generation comes and goes. The lives of Xidi and Hongcun are eternal, with residents' lifestyles and production methods unchanged for centuries. Thanks to modern preservation efforts, the time-honored civilization will continue its legacy, and future generations can learn about it first-hand rather than from history books.

Elders enjoy a peaceful life. by Zi Xu

An antique shop in Xidi.

Tips:

Transportation: Visitors to Xidi and Hongcun can fly to a nearby major city such as Huangshan, Shanghai, Hangzhou, or Hefei, and then take a bus or rent a car.

Accommodation: Tourists are recommended to stay in Xidi or Hongcun overnight to enjoy totally different views of the village at dusk and at dawn. Many villagers offer family hotels and a standard room is usually affordable at around 50 yuan per night.

Food: If you are staying at a local's home, congratulations! You can ask your host for some home-made dishes, including chicken soup, stir-fried pork with dried bamboo shoot, and home-made wine. Also, try black sesame cakes and dried vegetable pancakes sold by street vendors.

Looking Good on Paper

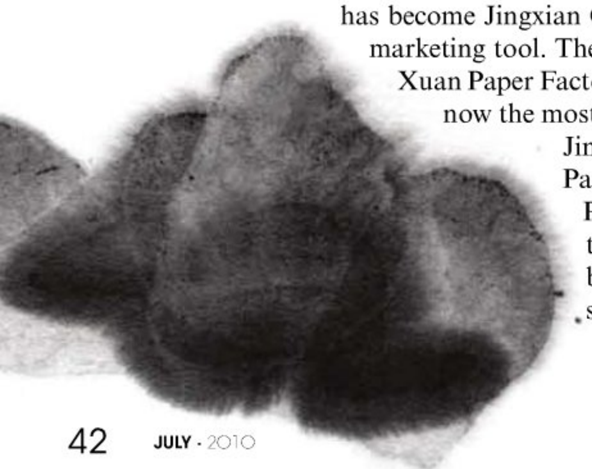
Text and photographs by Chen Zhen

Wang Xizhi, one of the most famous Chinese calligraphers of all time, once compared the writing brush, ink stick, ink stone and paper — known as a Chinese scholar's four jewels — to weapons. He also believed that only people of a certain civility and moral rank would be able to wield these weapons effectively. In China, over the past several thousand years, the writing brush, ink stick, ink stone and paper have all developed into something much more than just stationery – they have become vessels of Chinese temperament, personality, morality, and culture.

Today, the instruments have been mostly replaced by computers, and have become ornaments rather than practical tools. But in southern Anhui Province, the ancient tradition of paper and brushes has been carefully preserved. Little has changed in this remarkable region – be it the skills of the craftsmen making fine brushes and paper, the Anhui-style architecture, picturesque landscapes, or the daily lives and habits of the locals. Tradition, with its formidable power, appears to have conquered time.

The Xuan Paper

On August 8, 2008, during the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Games, a massive scroll was unfurled displaying various Chinese elements: beautiful blue-and-white porcelain, the writing brush, Xuan paper, and the ink stone. This 30-second segment of the ceremony has become Jingxian County of Anhui Province's best marketing tool. The four workers from the Red Star Xuan Paper Factory who appeared at the event are now the most famous people in town.



Jingxian County's Paper Cultural Park is located in the Red Star Xuan Paper Factory. This park attempts to re-enact the ancient lifestyle by carefully reproducing workshops, interior furnishings, paper making tools, and even workers' clothes of that time. In the six workshops, workers demonstrate the major procedures for paper making, including grass cutting, material washing, and drying. In one workshop, paper making screens are submersed in water. Then, two masters roll the bamboo screen into pulp, and quickly lift it out. One puts the screen on a wooden board and presses it gently. A piece of wet paper suddenly appears.

On a rainy winter day, the humid air permeates the whole room. Xuan Paper making requires a steady, reasonable temperature. For this reason, heating is strictly forbidden even during the coldest days. Instead, the workers prepare a basin of hot water beside the tank and each time they fish out a piece of paper from the cold water, they quickly use the hot water to warm their hands. Every two or three seconds, this procedure is repeated. The quality of the Xuan Paper largely depends on the skill and cooperation of the two workers. It takes at least three years to become a master, even for the most talented students.

The Xuan Brush

Master She Zhengjun, who has been working in Jingxian County's Xuan Brush Factory his entire life, laments the loss of tradition. Despite the fact that the Xuan Brush Factory has been listed among China's National Intangible Cultural Heritages, "it is really not the time for the art," he sighs. "Now, primary school students have their own laptops. Even pens are not frequently used, let alone brushes. Making brushes is not a high-income career, and the 800-yuan monthly salary scares many young people off the profession. They would rather go to the big cities to pursue their dreams. In the early 1990s, a number of brush factories in town closed down, or switched to other businesses. Those still manufacturing today don't make much money." Faced with the rush to modernize, many traditional crafts and skills are on the verge of extinction.

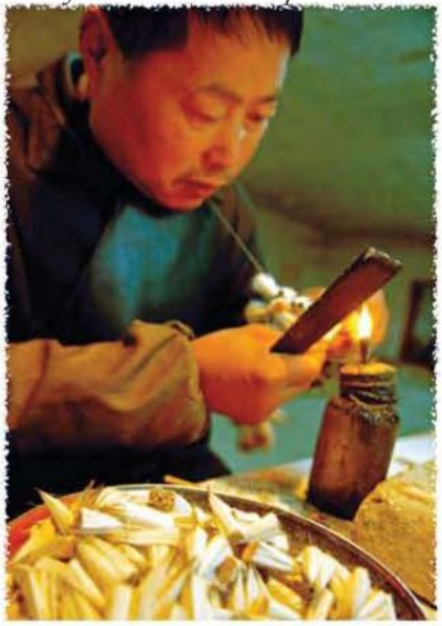
Inside She's studio, more than 500 rabbit skins are scattered about. But out of this collection, the master can only find enough suitable fine hairs to fill a single bamboo sieve. Even for a skilled worker, it takes at least seven days to collect hairs from the 500 rabbits.

It is not only a problem of time. Many further procedures, including cleaning and neatening the hair, need to be done in water. For more than 10 hours a day, workers must constantly submerge their hands in chilly temperatures. After working for more than two decades like this, She's hands are covered with scars. But he sees it as just a necessary part of the job. "Hands are essential to decide whether it is good fur or not," he says. "Both machines and eyes are inadequate. Apprentices worry more about properly training their hands than about the cold water. Really it has nothing to do with talent. It is all about hard work. Practice makes perfect."

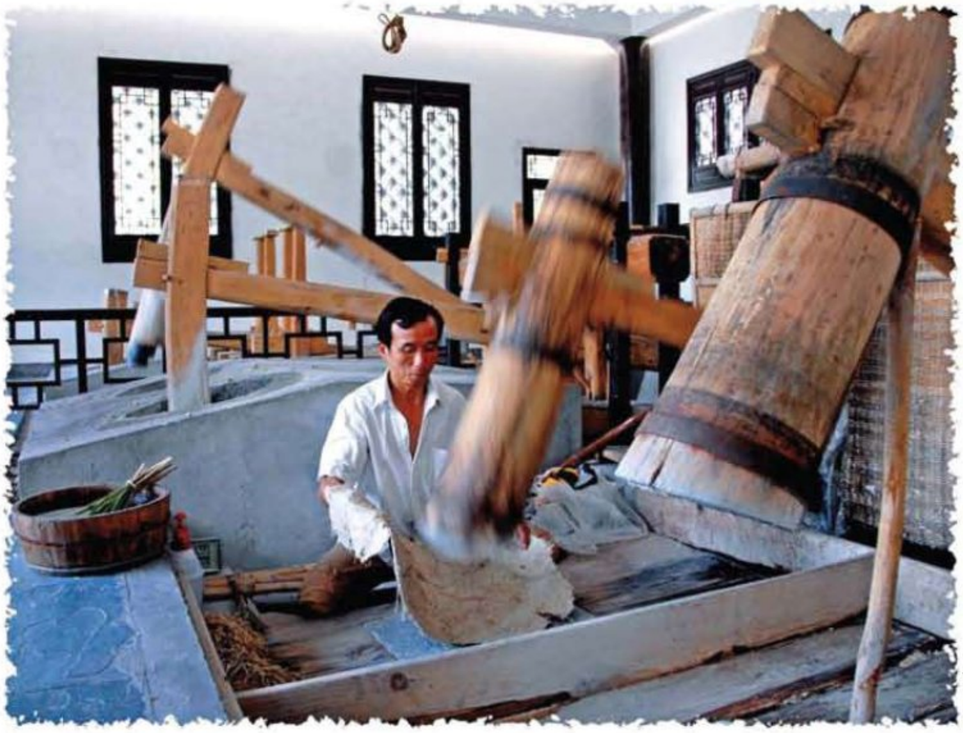
The next day, Master She travels to northern Jiangsu Province to purchase goat pelts. In the next few days he will journey to Northeast China for wolf tails and badger pelts. He has always purchased the raw materials by himself. "I need to touch these furs and feel their quality," he explains. "Finding suitable raw material is the most important aspect of brush making. Later procedures will be a waste of time if the raw materials are not up to par."

But there are also 'innovative' ideas executed by some private workshops. "We add man-made wool fabrics in brushes," one shop owner says. "This gives the brushes better elasticity. Nowadays, people using brushes are not as proficient as their predecessors. They find it difficult to master the brushes made in line with traditional techniques. So, the brush making process is a little different today."

Examining rabbit hairs.



Every brush is a masterpiece.



To guarantee the quality of Xuan Paper, the raw materials need to be beaten repeatedly.

The factory's seal is stamped on Xuan Paper to guarantee quality.

Painting patterns on ink sticks.

The Anhui Ink Stick

Shangzhuang Town, Jixi County, Anhui Province is home to an ink stick factory.

In the aged workshop, a strong ink smell permeates the air. Under dim lights, workers in blue-cloth suits are carefully weighing ingredients on a scale. Getting proportions just right is crucial. Other workers are hammering rhythmically, beating ink paste over and over. In this workshop, there is little sign of modern industrialization. All the techniques are the same as those used several centuries ago, as if time has been suspended.

Old Cheng, the factory manager, was once an ink stick craftsman. He began to trade the Anhui ink stick in 1982, and in 1987, he established his own factory, developing it into a business with more than 40 workers and an annual output value of 700,000 yuan. "My grandfather was an Anhui businessman," he recalls. "In South China that stands for integrity and honesty." Like many people in southern Anhui, Cheng likes to recount the story of his family in his strong local accent. His sense of honor and tradition serves as supporting evidence that he has perfectly preserved the old techniques of ink stick making. Once, in 2008, Cheng had a batch of ink sticks shipped to Japan. When the shipment was opened at the other end for routine checking, some sticks appeared damaged due to the dry local weather. Though it was not his responsibility, Cheng paid out nearly 100,000 yuan in compensation to the buyer.

Various shops in Tunxi, Jixi, and Shexian claim the mantle of 'time-honored brand'. An old saying holds that "High quality ink sticks gather in Jixi," which helps explain why ink stick businesses have mushroomed around Jixi. Of the four greatest ink stick producers during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), both Wang Jinsheng and Hu Kaiwen were Jixi natives. Hu was particularly renowned, and various shops now claim to be the offspring of Old Hu's craftsmanship.

Shexian Ink Stone

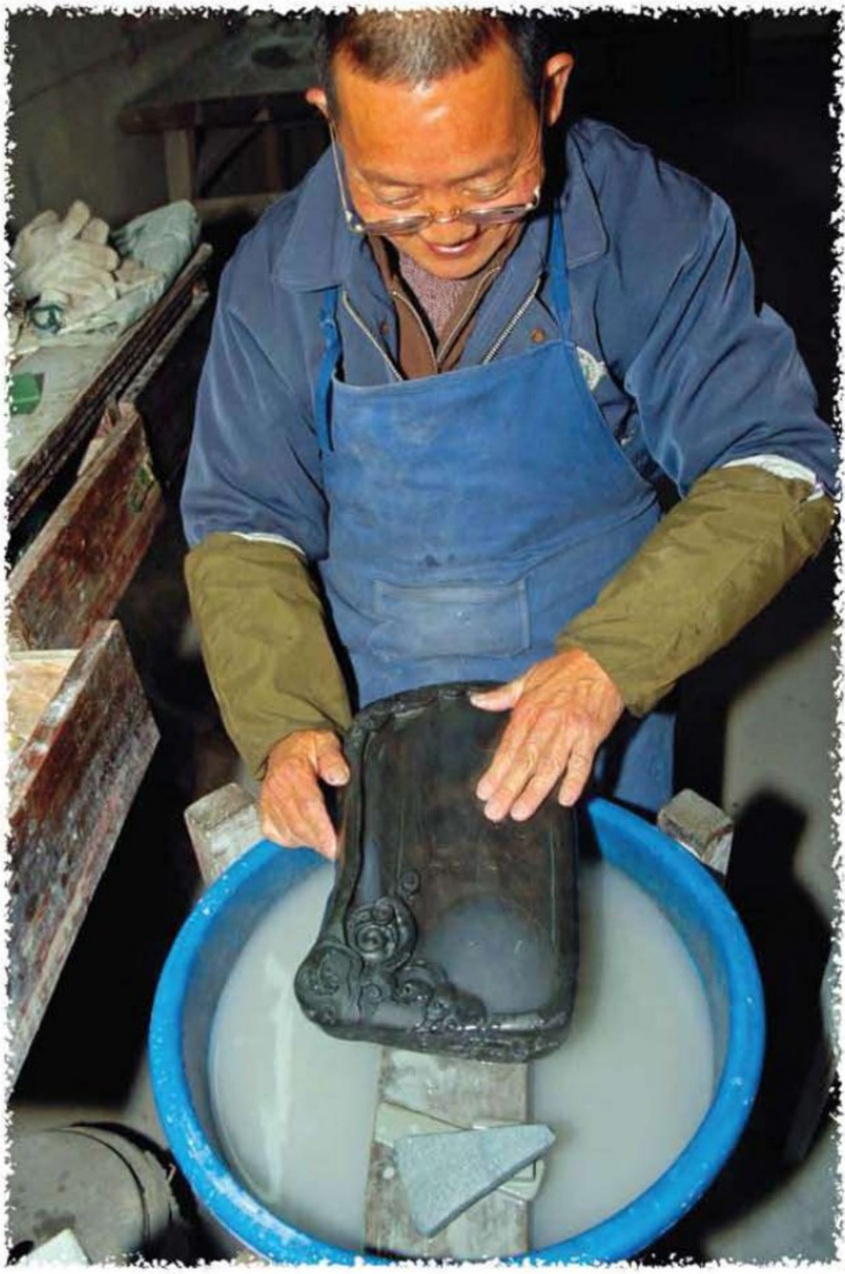
Established during the 1950s, the state-owned Shexian County Ink Stone Factory has not changed at all. A red star still adorns the wall, and slogans of the Cultural Revolution decorate the wooden gates. Numerous retro Yongjiu bicycles, banners reading "striving for better quality," and white enamel mugs featuring the factory's logo, leave an impression of another era.

A wise-looking master, well into his seventies, describes the ancient process of ink stone making with a contagious passion. "Outsiders nowadays like to make the ink stone a mysterious thing," he grins, sarcastically referring to ink stone businessmen as outsiders. "I've been making ink stones for decades, and I tell you, there is no secret to it at all. Some stones look fantastic, but they only appear that way. Some look bad initially, but you may be surprised on closer inspection. How can you know everything? In my opinion, deciding what is and isn't good ink stone is rather like gambling."

The old master tells me that when he finds good raw material he is always reluctant to do any carving. Instead, he just rounds off the corners and does some polishing, and the stone is already an art piece. Of China's four most renowned ink stones, the Duanzhou brand is renowned for its deep and circular carvings, while the Shexian brand is notable for its shallow cuts. Carving patterns are decided by the hardness of different stones. "To sell more of their products, outsiders frequently put deep carvings on Shexian Ink Stones," the old man winces. "If they cannot do it by hand, some even employ an electric drill!" Like any great craftsman, he talks of his profession as if it is as vital and precious as the air he breathes. With the passion of such men, traditions will surely be around for a long time to come.

Tools for making ink sticks are passed down over generations.

Shexian Ink Stones are carved by hand.

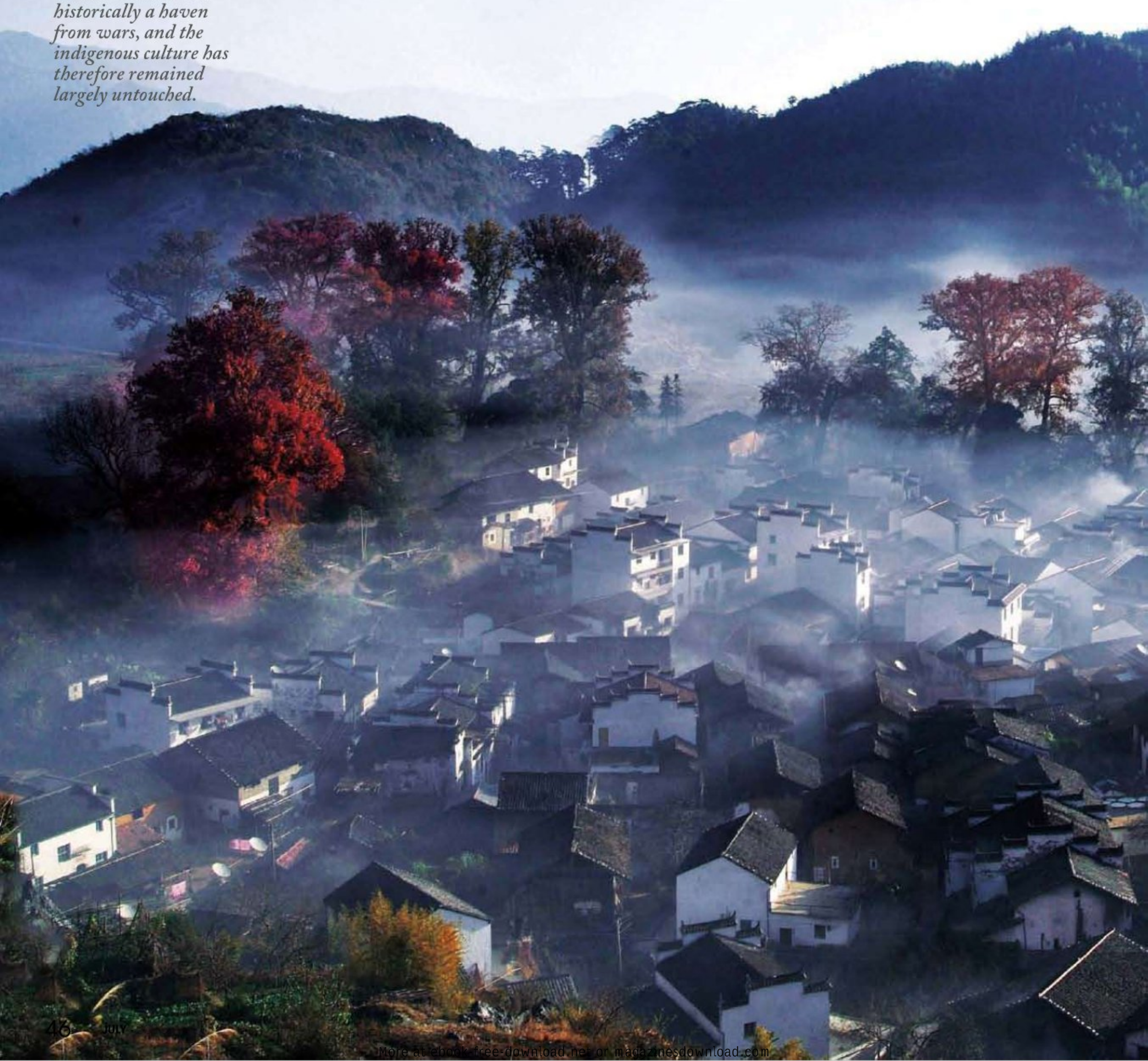


Examining a stone.

A French Depiction of Stones & Ink

Text and photographs by Zhang Jianping

An ancient village nestled in the mountains. Due to its mountainous terrain and lack of roads, Huizhou was historically a haven from wars, and the indigenous culture has therefore remained largely untouched.



Anne Garrigue is an influential French writer, who has lived in Asia for 16 years. Over this period, she has developed a perceptive understanding of Eastern cultures, and published a number of books on subjects such as the lure of the Orient in the French imagination.

On September 18, 2006, at the invitation of the local government, Garrigue paid a three-day visit to Huizhou (an ancient name for a mountainous enclave in southern Anhui, which is home to Huangshan City). During a meeting with the mayor of Huangshan, Garrigue expressed her admiration for the region and her intention to write a brochure to recommend Huizhou to the French people. The mayor supported this idea, and encouraged her to "write a book about Huizhou, since no foreign writer has yet tackled this area."

Shortly after, Garrigue worked out an outline for the book, which aimed to include passages on Huizhou's buildings, important historical figures, and handicraft industry during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. Considering that the book would be mainly distributed in France, she also included descriptions of how Huizhou farmers live today, how the traditional craftsmanship is handed down over generations, and how the locals use and preserve old houses. Garrigue collaborated with a Chinese photographer who provided images of 16 Huizhou villages which vividly showcased the charms of this picture-postcard region.

Lacquered wood engraving – a local Huizhou craft.

Garrigue researched Huizhou very carefully. In order to introduce Huizhou tea, she decided to interview a tea farmer living in a remote mountain of Xiuning County. The locale was not accessible by vehicle, so Garrigue had to walk 2.5 kilometers along the mountain path before finding her interviewee. "The landscapes reminded me of my home region in France," she remembers. "I believe our culture shares many things in common with Huizhou."

On April 20, 2008, Garrigue revisited Anhui, and this time she specially researched Wuyuan — reputed to be the most beautiful village in China. She remained silent as the car bumped along the picturesque mountain roads, and the photographer remembers wondering why she seemed so indifferent to the surrounding beauty. He later discovered that this day was her son's birthday, and that her little boy was not feeling well. Garrigue's dedication was obvious — leaving her sick child at home to finish her China project.

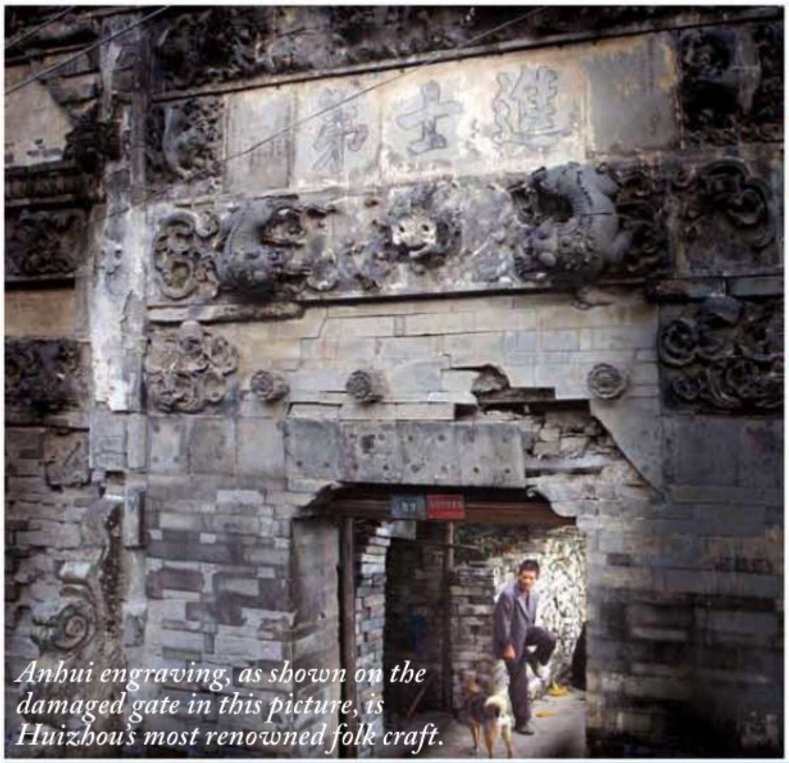
In three years, Anne Garrigue visited more than 30 villages in Huizhou conducting research. She can now speak fluent Chinese, and after an interview with Han Yu, the hostess of a local bar, they became close friends. In July 2009, Garrigue invited her family from France to visit Huizhou, which proved to be just as captivating for them.

Garrigue carefully selected the photographs that were to go into the finished book, making sure the true face of Huizhou was being presented. She selected many candid images randomly captured to give a hint of local lifestyles.

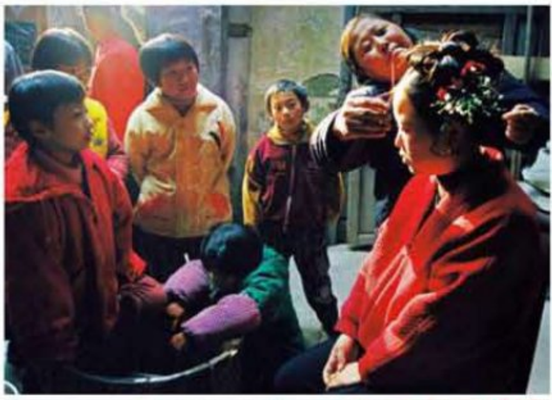
On December 5, 2009, the book, titled "Of Stones and Ink: China and the country of the literati merchants," was launched, alongside the "Huizhou Faces" Photo Exhibition in Beijing. Anne addressed the ceremony in Chinese, saying "I love Huizhou, and its architecture, the farmers, and …". Her passion was contagious. Later, with the assistance of the Chinese Heritage Foundation and Wang Yan, president of Sina.com who is a native of Huizhou, the same exhibition was held at the Chinese Center in Paris, where French visitors were able to get a better understanding of Huizhou and its culture.

Garrigue learned many things in Huizhou, but she says that one of the most important lessons is this: People around the world may have different languages, political views, and life experiences, but different cultures can always be mutually appreciated and communicated. Through this process, people learn to be more inclusive, and the world can become even more beautiful. Her book will hopefully be part of the process.

Xidi Village in winter.

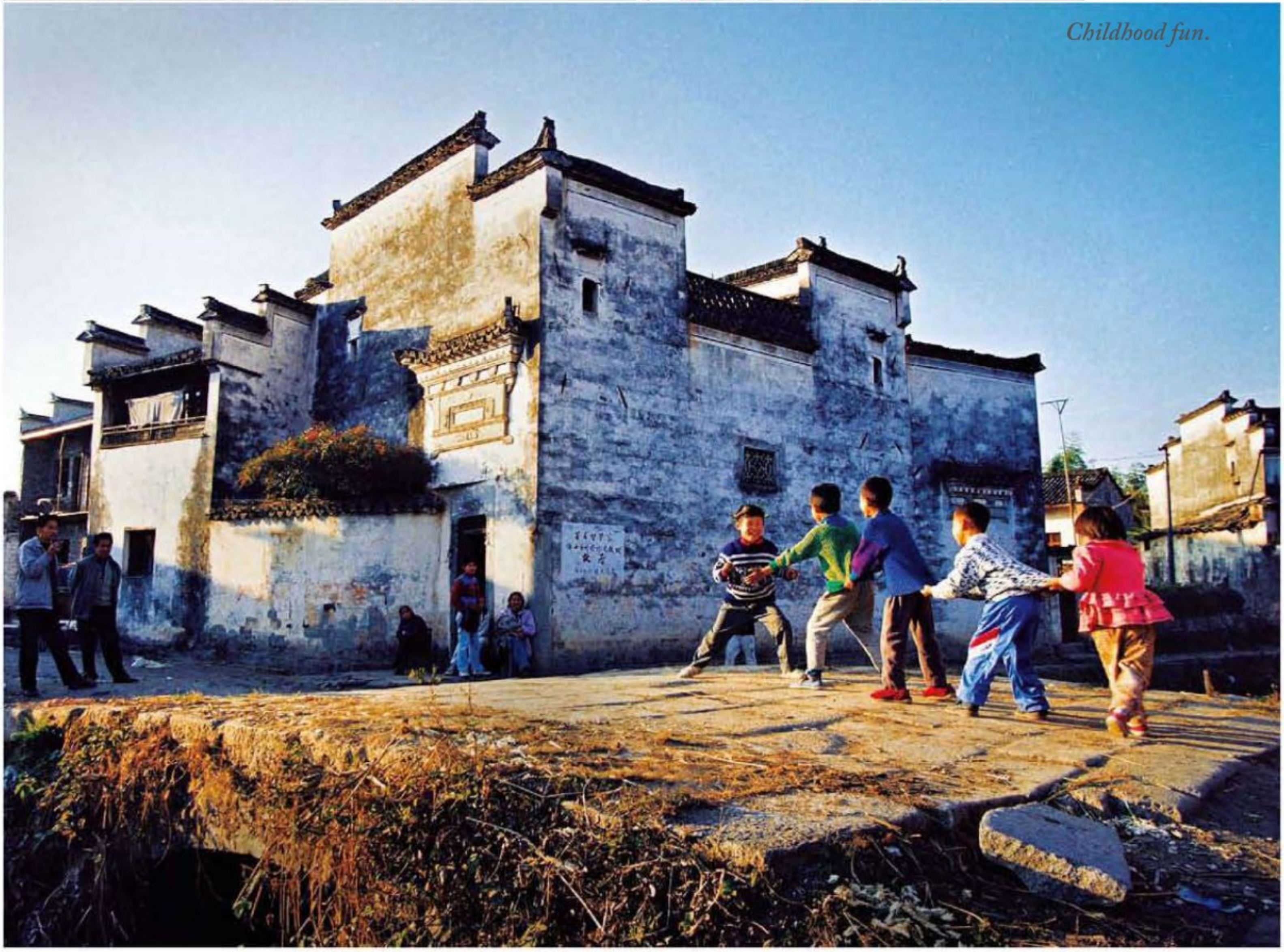


Anhui engraving, as shown on the damaged gate in this picture, is Huizhou's most renowned folk craft.

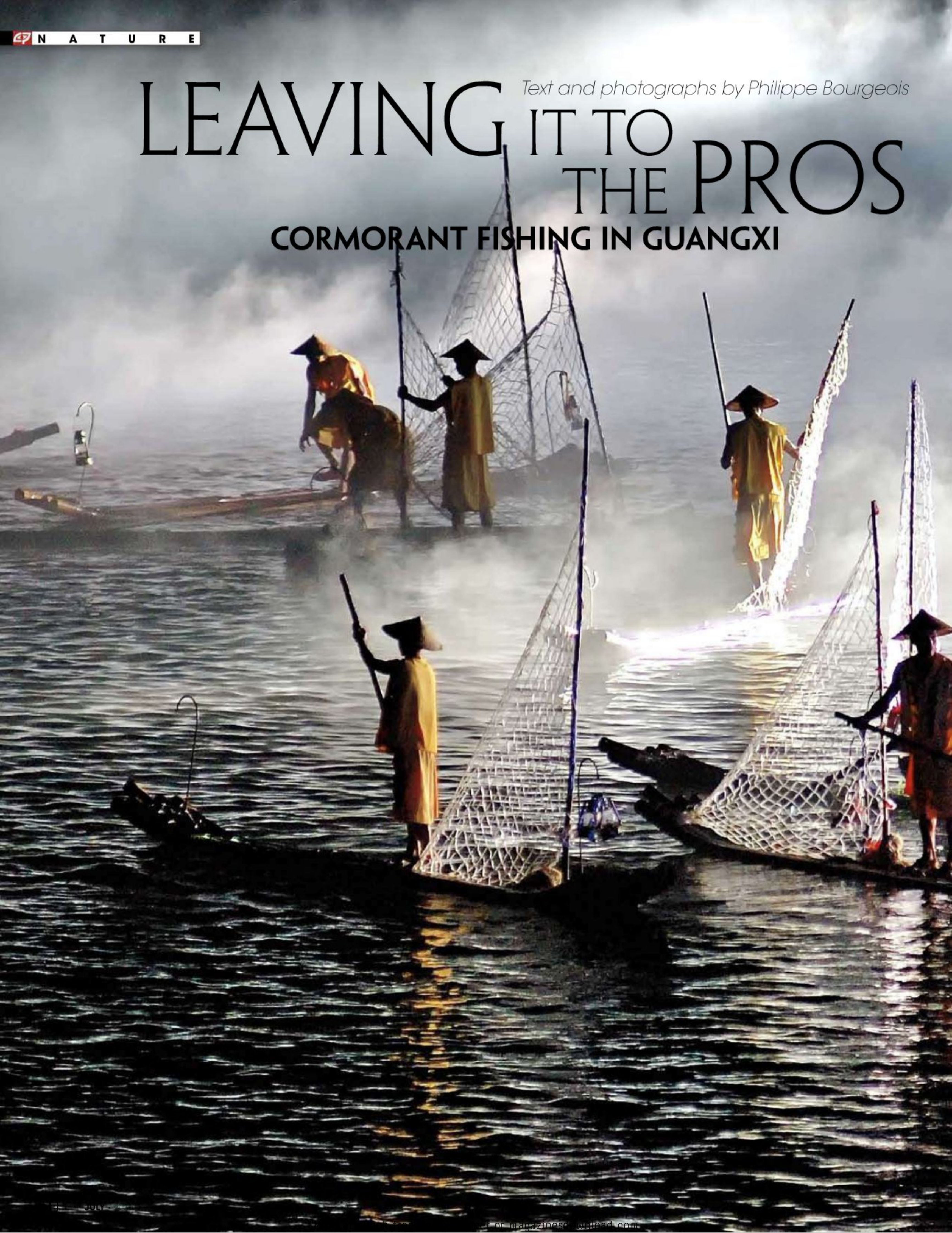


Kailian (shaving fine hairs on face), a traditional wedding custom in Anhui, is still preserved in some mountain villages. This picture was taken in Pingshan Village, Yixian County.

A reunion dinner shared by neighbors on the eve of Spring Festival, Shangzhang Village, Qimen County.



Childhood fun.

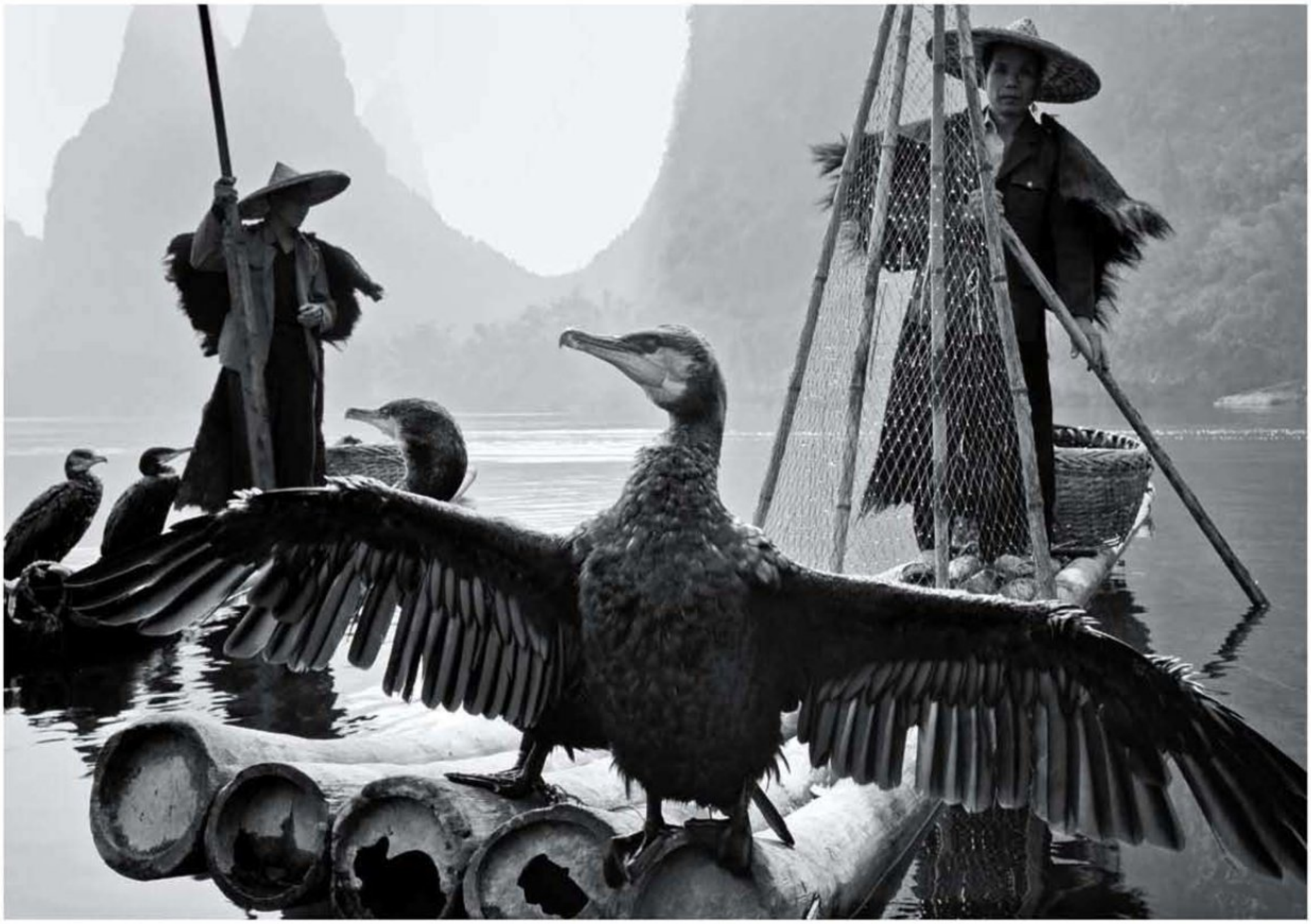


LEAVING IT TO THE PROS

CORMORANT FISHING IN GUANGXI

Text and photographs by Philippe Bourgeois

Guilin, in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, is famous for its wonderful natural scenery. Limestone peaks, colorful ricefields, picturesque villages, minority people (mostly Zhuang and Yao), and the beautiful Li River are all fascinating attractions for visitors to discover. A local fishing practice is also particularly interesting: the co-opting of cormorants to catch fish and bring them back to their masters.



The practice of using aquatic birds as partners for fishing was for centuries a common activity in most of the villages along the Li River. Fishermen used a bamboo raft equipped with lanterns to cruise over the waters of the river and reach their favorite fishing spot, preferably at night or in the very early morning when bigger boats would not disturb the fish.

Today it is mostly done for tourists. In the raft I was taken on, a group of 4 to 6 cormorant birds quietly waited for their master to take them to work. They were completely silent, making no sudden movements that might spook the fish and make them hide in deeper waters. The whole team seemed perfectly trained for the exercise. When the raft stopped, none of the birds moved an inch until the fisherman told them to prepare, communicating in a special language which locals have developed over years of bonding with the animals. After only a few muttered sounds, perfectly understood, the birds slid silently into the water. The fisherman then commands them individually, so that they can take position on the water surface and dive one by one, or in groups, according to the selected fishing strategy. The cormorants execute their orders with perfect timing. They start to hunt underwater, carefully examining their surroundings, and seize fish with extraordinary speed and precision. In the event that they are unable to catch one by themselves, they team up, one bird pushing the panicked fish in the direction of another, who waits patiently under the water. Then the victorious cormorant brings back its trophy to the fisherman on the raft, and gets a reward from him. Sometimes it is just a word of encouragement, still in "codified" language. The bird is usually allowed to eat the small fish as compensation for its effort, but the big ones are the property of the fisherman. Then the bird goes back to work with the team, and the ballet lasts until the fisherman gives an order to rally the boat. In one or two hours, a good team of cormorants can sometimes bring back enough fish to allow the fisherman a successful living.

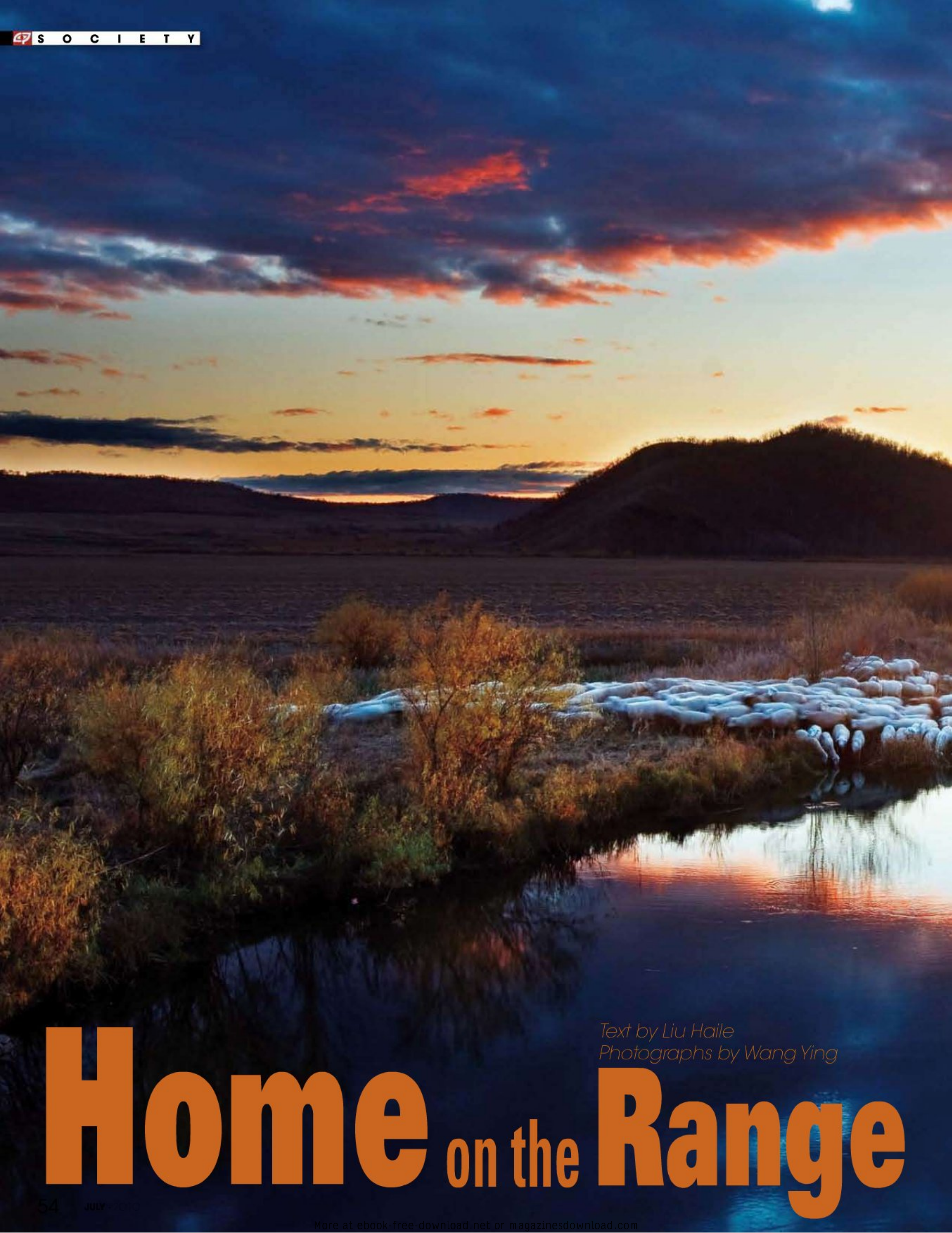
But it takes special training to achieve these results, and becoming a successful cormorant fisherman is an arduous process. Techniques are transmitted generation after generation, both for fishermen and birds.

The potential success of a cormorant starts even before birth, and fishermen start to train their 'children' at an early age. Every year, the owner of the birds selects a few of them for reproduction. He then takes them to a person acting as a bird "matchmaker" in the village. Here, he makes "presentations", and finally the birds select their favored mate. The role of the "matchmaker" is to determine which birds are likely to be compatible, and finally give birth to future fishing champions. This will have a great bearing on the fisherman's income, so the "matchmaker" is very well respected in the village.

When cormorant couples are formed, then begins another ritual: the choice of a good location to build a nest. Everything is done to ensure comfort and protection for the birds, so that the female will produce eggs of the best quality. Each day, fishermen visit the nest location to check that everything is in order. Even when the eggs are laid, fishermen still support the birds, providing them with food, and protecting the nest from potential predators or thieves. This lasts until the eggs can be removed from the nest safely and brought back home with the parents. Then the fisherman acts as a parent himself, taking care of the eggs up to the time the young cormorants are strong enough to fend for themselves. The newborn birds quickly adopt the fisherman as a parent. This is a crucial stage in their education, since the young bird will then learn the fisherman's "codified language", and when it is strong enough and understands the basics of this language, it will join mature birds on the fishing team to learn fishing techniques: First as a spectator, then gradually as a participant. At an early age, the fisherman ties a small rope around the bird's neck to prevent it from swallowing fish and teach it to bring them back to him instead, up to the time the cormorant is fully trained.

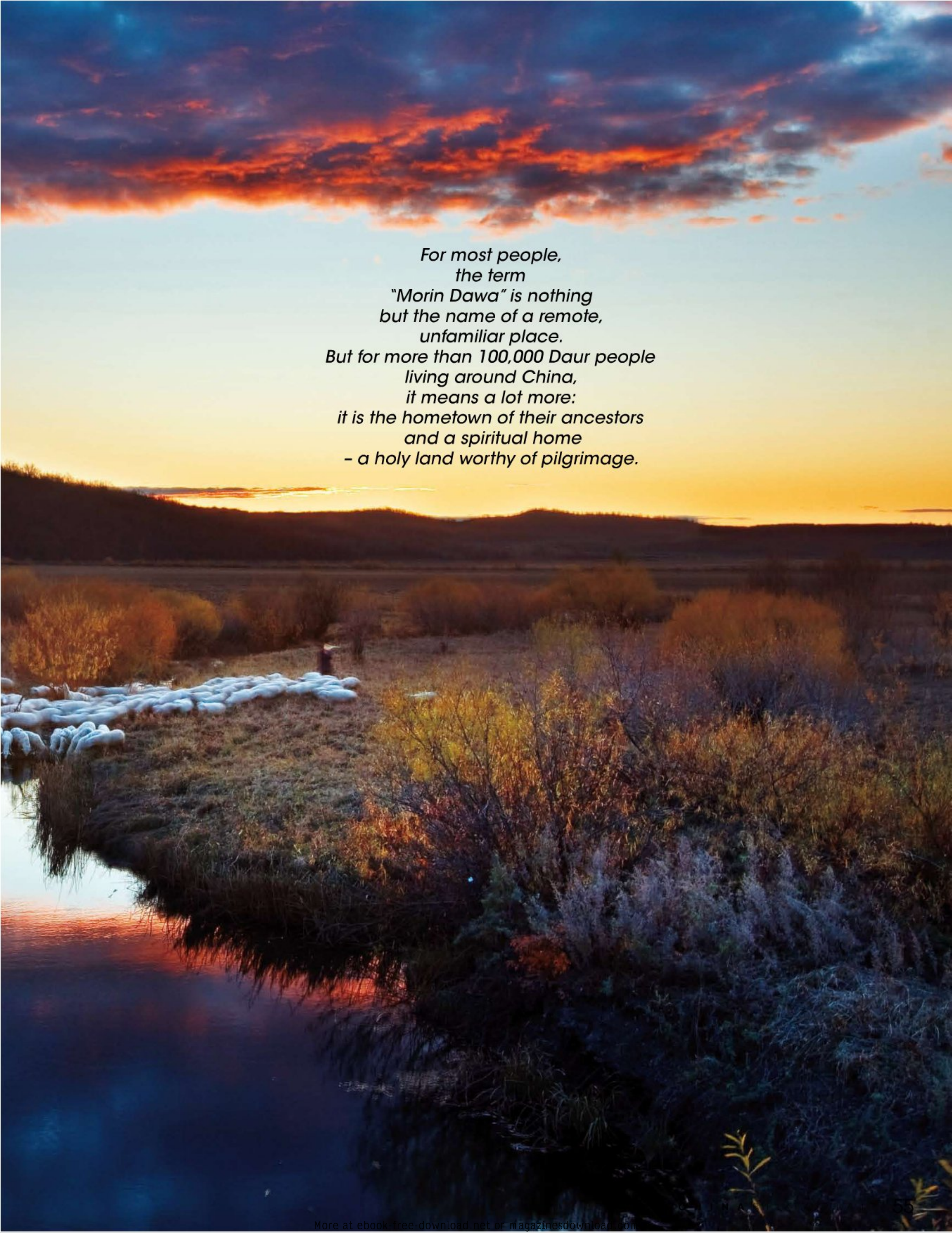
Recently, with the development of more industries in Guilin, the Li River has become more polluted, and the population of fish has declined dramatically. Fishermen have started looking at alternative sources of income, since they can not sell enough fish on the market to support their families. Gradually, as some villagers started to work in the tourism industry, some of the fishermen did too.

But this meant they did not have the time to raise new generations of cormorants, and the tradition started to slowly disappear, year after year. When the film director Zhang Yimou opened his "Impression Liu Sanjie" show in Yangshuo, near Guilin, he hired many fishermen as performers. This allowed them to guarantee a stable source of income for their family, one that was an improvement over past years. Finally, most fishermen decided to start a new life and embrace the new economy. They abandoned their ancestral occupation of fishing with cormorants. But though this long lasting tradition is slowly disappearing from the area, it will remain forever in the memories of all who witnessed it as an extraordinary example of collaboration between man and beast.



Home on the Range

Text by Liu Haile
Photographs by Wang Ying



For most people,
the term
"Morin Dawa" is nothing
but the name of a remote,
unfamiliar place.
But for more than 100,000 Daur people
living around China,
it means a lot more:
it is the hometown of their ancestors
and a spiritual home
– a holy land worthy of pilgrimage.

A tranquil town in Morin Dawa.

Sweet Home

Located at the easternmost edge of Inner Mongolia's Hulun Buir Grassland, Morin Dawa, meaning "mountains only traversable by riding horses" in Daur language, is the only Daur autonomous region in China. The Nenjiang River meanders along its eastern border, while the dramatic Greater Hinggan Mountains shelter the land to the north. The middle ground is crisscrossed with rolling hills while the boundless Songnen Plain lies to the south. Morin Dawa boasts a vast expanse of untilled lands, swamps, grasslands and wetlands. A total of 56 rivers snake across this pristine landscape, along which live a dozen ethnic groups.

One of these is the Daur. Their villages feature thatched houses with clay gables, and each home is surrounded by decorative fences woven with rose willow twigs. In the courtyards, cattle sheds are placed far away from living quarters for the sake of cleanliness. Traditional Daur residences feature frames made of pine or birch timber, clay walls, and straw-thatched roofs. Typically, the front doors and windows face south to allow more sunlight inside. The bedroom usually has three heated *kang* (brick beds) that are connected together. Such beds are necessary especially during the chilly winters.

Morin Dawa covers an area of 11,000 square kilometers, and has a population of 300,000. Although sparsely populated, the land is far from desolate. In summer, vast expanses of sunflowers appear in full bloom, while canola fields on the hillsides form a sea of yellow flowers that stretches to the horizon. On the untilled land grow waist-high weeds, dotted with an eclectic mix of wild flowers in every color of the rainbow.

Festive Celebrations

Like many other ethnic groups in China, Daur people consider the Spring Festival to be their most important celebration. Upon the arrival of the 12th lunar month, local women begin to sew new clothes for their children and prepare steamed buns stuffed with bean paste or fruits for the coming festival. Men busy themselves slaughtering pigs and sheep and making trips to town to collect provisions. On the 23rd day, locals offer sacrifices to the Kitchen God. Then, they clean up courtyards, barns, and cattle sheds to welcome the New Year. On New Year's Eve, each household pastes fresh Spring Festival couplets on the doors, barns, and even cabinets, and burns a bonfire outside their courtyard to pray for blessings. The more intense the fire, the more luck a family believes it will receive in the coming year. Before dinner, the elders surround the bonfire to pray for their cattle. Every house-

Animal husbandry remains an important industry in Morin Dawa.

Local farmers harvest soy in the autumn.

The Nirgi Reservoir at sunrise.

hold follows the same pattern, fostering a genuine sense of community.

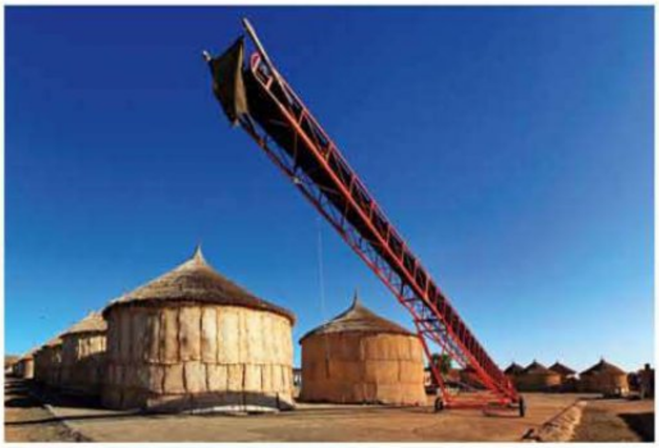
On the first morning of the new year, each family places wine, meat and pastry in their courtyard as offerings to the gods. Then, they treat guests who come to pay a New Year call with steamed buckwheat or millet cakes. Many other customs are observed during the festival: Young people play field hockey, the elderly gather to recall past legends, and women perform traditional dances.

The 16th day of the first lunar month marks a unique Daur festival called "Huoudur," meaning "Black Ash Day." Early in the morning, elders smear black ash on the foreheads of their still-sleeping children, in order to dispel misfortune and bring blessings. After getting up, youngsters like to chase one another and daub black ash on each other. Some believe the tradition derives from harvest celebrations. Another legend goes that evil spirits prevail on this day, and black ash on the face can ward off misfortune.

Traditional Dolls

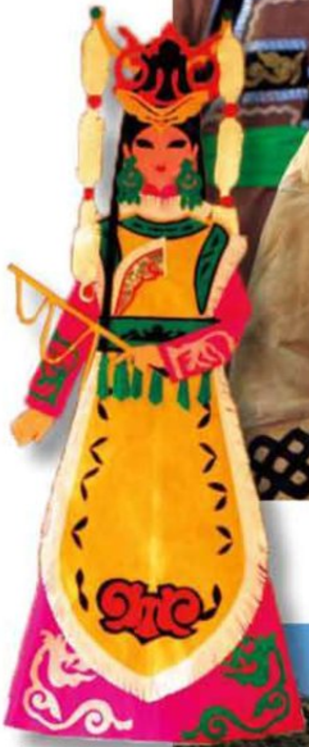
Hanika is a kind of traditional handmade doll popular amongst Daur children – especially girls – in Morin Dawa. Girls will carefully gather materials from everyday life to make their *hanika*. Colored candy wrappers, leftover cloth, matchboxes, cigarette packets, birch bark, and even wood shavings are all common resources. When their mothers cook eggs, local girls sometimes ask them to dig a hole as small as possible so as to preserve the hollow shell, which they use to make *hanika*. The girls compete to find the most interesting doll materials.

Then it is onto the design process. Daur girls can be seen sitting cross-legged on their beds, meticulously constructing their dolls with the materials they have gathered. The process seems to take up all their concentration, which is usually only broken when their mothers call them to come and eat.


The Baoshan Grain Depot.

Agricultural machines are now widely used in Morin Dawa.

Local hunters. by Zhao Ning



A hanika doll. by Zhao Ning

Home of Hockey

Historical records reveal that Daur people were the first ethnic group to play field hockey in China, a practice which can be traced back nearly 1,000 years. In Morin Dawa, almost everyone, from toddlers to the elderly, knows how to play the game, hence the area's reputation as the "Home of Hockey."

Locals call it "beikuo," but it bears a striking resemblance to modern-day hockey. Traditional "beikuo" sticks are made from slender oak branches with a crook on one end, and the balls are made of felt or tree knots. On important occasions such as sacrificial ceremonies, locals will hold "beikuo" games to celebrate. Many spectators will cheer on their favored team. Games are often held at night due to the fact that most villagers need to work during the daytime. Torches are used to light up the pitch, and small holes are drilled into the balls, which are then filled with turpentine, grease or other flammable liquids. When the match begins, the ball is lit, and players compete fiercely to gain possession, with bright lines zigzagging across the field as the object is passed.

Nowadays, oak-made sticks are seldom used in modern field hockey games. But the traditional "beikuo" remains popular in today's Morin Dawa. The fact that seven of the 11 players who comprise the National Field Hockey Team of China come from Morin Dawa attests to the enduring popularity of the game there.

A local girl plays with pigs.

Field hockey is a popular pastime in Morin Dawa, even amongst the elderly. by Hu Ming

Travel Tips

How to Get There

Tourists can take the train to Qiqihar or Nehe City, Heilongjiang Province. From Qiqihar, there are buses to Morin Dawa costing about 25 yuan per person. Nehe is only 25 kilometers away from Nirgi Town, the administrative center of Morin Dawa Daur Autonomous Banner, and tourists can take a taxi from Nehe Railway Station. Self-driving tours are also recommended, so that tourists can enjoy the grassland scenery at their own pace.

When to Visit

The best time to visit Morin Dawa is from July to September, when local grasslands are at their most beautiful and the climate is pleasant.

Where to Stay

Tourists can stay in hotels in Nirgi Town or rent a room with local Daur families.

What to See

In addition to picturesque grassland views, tourists can also enjoy camping, picnicking, and horse riding in summer months. During winter, fishing on icy lakes is a popular local pastime. Famous tourist attractions include Morin Dawa Mountain and China Daur Ethnic Park.

Morin Dawa Mountain: Located 90 kilometers away from Nirgi Town, the mountain provides the name for the Morin Dawa area. In summer, oak and birch trees thrive and wild flowers bloom, cattle graze on the mountainsides, and the Nuomin River flows silently at the foot of the mountain.

China Daur Ethnic Park: Hidden in the mountains nine kilometers north of Nirgi Town, the park is one of the most representative tourist spots in Morin Dawa. The admission fee is 25 yuan per person. Here, tourists can learn about Daur culture in depth. The east section of the park features a round recreational space, 90 meters in diameter. In the center of this is a huge column carved with Daur totems, as well as artwork which vividly depicts the ethnic group's traditional lifestyle. In the southeast of the park is a monument to unsung heroes, which carries a steel sculpture depicting Daur soldiers fighting against Russian and Japanese invaders and Kuomintang troops.

A pastoral scene in Morin Dawa.

Forging a Future

Text and photographs by Wang Wenyuan

Six hundred years ago, some men moved from Shanxi Province to Gansu Province, and spent six years founding four "General Feng's Columns" along the Yangtze River bank in Lanzhou City. After being eroded by wind and rain over the ensuing years, only one column survives today, covered head to toe in rust. It is said that in this dusty region still live the descendants of the builders. We attempted to track them down.

Yongjing County is less than an hour's drive from Lanzhou. The descendants of the family, surnamed Wang, live there in Gucheng Village. The Wangs are held in great esteem within the locality due to their expertise in manufacturing moulds. The village features neat streets and a tranquil atmosphere, and is actually a model village of the New Village Construction movement.

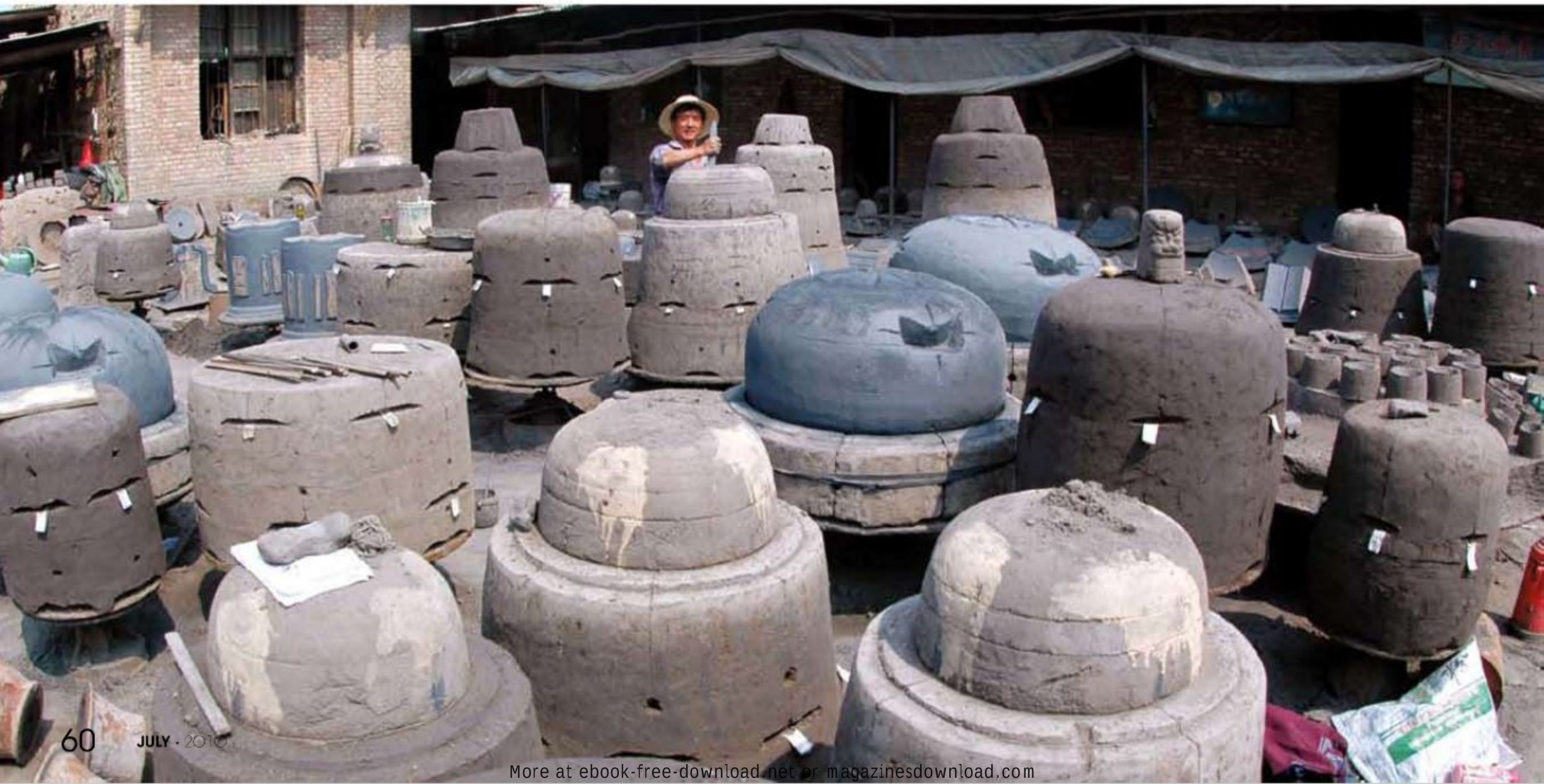
Upon arriving at the Wang village home, the courtyard was blocked by a huge iron clock, a ten-meter-high incense burner, and an enormous pot – signs that manufacturing is still a booming business. But inside the scene was quite different, with half finished moulds and dull grey sand covering every inch of the yard.

This foundry was set up by a middle-aged man named Wang Yuancai, a descendant of one of the ancient workmen responsible for the General's Columns along the Yangtze River. Wang Yuancai explained the history of his family: "According to our genealogy, my ancestor was one of the forging workers, and he was conscripted from Shanxi in the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)."

In the second half of the 14th Century, during the war with the remnants of Mongolian forces in the Hexi Corridor, General Feng Sheng decided to build a floating bridge to guarantee the delivery of military supplies. To build this, he required iron cables and a firm base onto which they could be lashed. Though the cables were easy to obtain, the base proved more problematic.

The manufacturing technology in ancient times was quite limited, so bases used to be enormous, sometimes dubbed iron cows or iron mountains. Only bases of such mass could withstand the forces of the river. Xu Lan of the Ming Dynasty wrote in his book *Floating Bridges*: "In building Zhenyuan Floating Bridge, two iron cables which were about 756 meters in length each connected 24 wood boats as bases, and two iron pillars on the southern and northern banks were built as cable stakes. These were called the General's Columns."

In the early Ming period, the iron smelting industry was most developed in Shanxi, which had abundant resources of iron ore and a long history of iron smelting. In records dating back to the first century, the annual output of smelted iron reached 1,035,000 kilograms. During the Ming, the iron industry became even stronger, and the locals developed a name for themselves as expert iron forgers. In 1369, the royal government ordered that skilled workmen from Shanxi be conscripted to Lanzhou to assist with the building of the floating bridge.



Most people in the village make a living by forging.

"My ancestors Wang Xuan and Wang Xun were ordered to Lanzhou at that time," Wang Yuancai explains. Wang Xuan and other workmen started construction of the bridge in 1369 and finished the General's Columns in 1376.

The genealogy of the Wang family reveals that after construction, some workmen returned to their hometown, some changed their business, some moved to other places. Wang Xuan and Wang Xun stayed in Lanzhou for more than a decade, then they moved to Bangechuan region in Yongjing County. The story of the building of the floating bridge across the Yangtze River was handed down from generation to generation in the family.

"The technology for constructing the General's Columns is not difficult," Wang Yuancai says. "As long as the cast iron melting is done correctly, making sure that the iron is molten without interruption during the founding process, then everything should be stable. The most important part is calculating the quantity of iron to be used and the timing of the iron melting. Too much iron would lead to excessive waste, and too little would bring about useless products."

It is said that 49 iron furnaces were built in Lanzhou, to the north of the Yangtze River, in order to melt enough iron. During the first casting, an accident occurred in which a few people died and the founding project was temporarily suspended. Later, the workmen reanalyzed the whole process and made a recalculation. Then, the project was restarted and completed successfully.

Having moved to Bangechuan region, the descendants of the Wang Family continued to make a living casting iron. Because of their link to the construction of the General's Columns, it is said that the royal government granted the Wangs a patent for casting iron implements in Gansu Province.

Before 1949, the family had started workshops in Linxia, Tongwei, Jingyuan, Huining, Longxi, Lintiao and many other regions in Qinghai Province, all of which used "Wang Family" as the trademark. After the founding of New China in 1949, many mechanical factories in Longxi, Lintiao, and Lanzhou were established under the "Wang Family" Foundry brand. Today, over 1500 descendants of Wang live in Bangechuan, where they have set up 7 foundries. Undoubtedly, they have benefited from the excellent workmanship and the reputation of their illustrious ancestors.

A great many interesting stories have also been handed down during the long history of the family. The thirteenth generation descendant of Wang Xuan, Wang Jianyao, made a copper pot for Labrang Temple located in Gansu, large enough to provide tea for more than a thousand monks at the same time. Whoever scooped the water had to climb up a ladder just to reach the brim of the pot. Another legend goes that in order to produce his art, a craftsman of the Wang Family meditated before the portrait of his ancestors, carrying burning incense, until the design appeared in his mind. If he intended to draw farm cattle, he would place a basin of water beside one, just out of reach, then watch the animal struggle to reach it. In this way, he was able to observe the strength of the animal, adding much dynamism to his finished work.

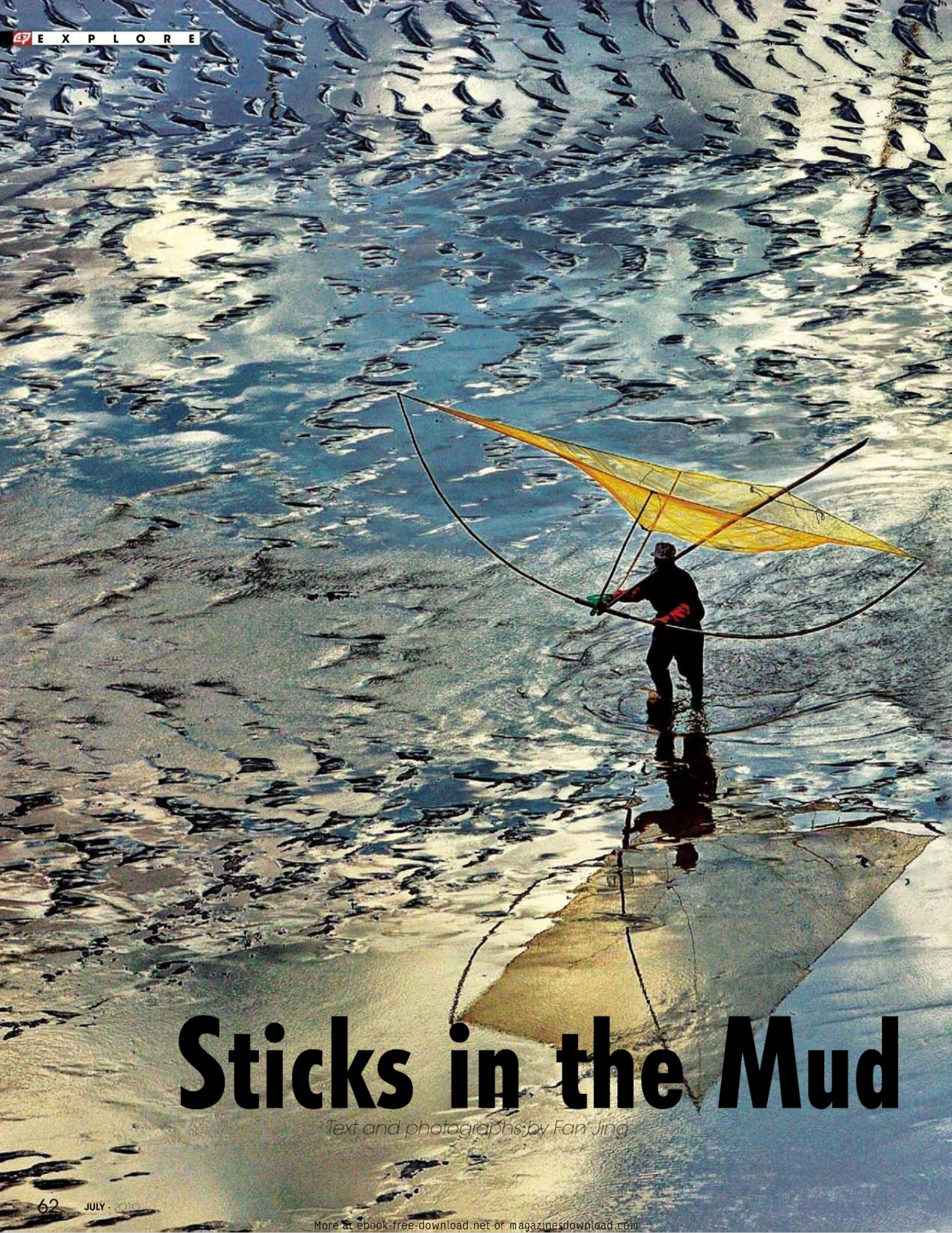
Wang Yuancai has his own philosophy: "Founding is a process which creates beauty from ugliness. After being melted in a furnace at high temperatures, blocks of unshapely, unformed iron are placed into moulds, and finally turned into exquisite artifacts. Fire is needed for the transformation. It is much the same with life."

Yongjing County is home to both the Han and Tibetan ethnic groups, and is the land through which the Silk Road once ran. Linxia, 80 kilometers from Yongjing, used to be one of six important tea-horse trading centers during the Ming Dynasty, where a great deal of business was conducted including the sale of religious items. Since ancient times, Yongjing has been famous for its excellent workmen and skilled craftsmen, including tailors, carpenters, and stonemasons.

There is an old saying in China, "Local geography shapes the characters of local people." After the Wang Family emigrated to Bangechuan, they were able to purchase a lot of cheap farmland and gain access to trade with Tibet. An ever-increasing demand for iron implements led to much success for the Wangs over the ensuing years, and is why the business is still going strong today.

Most of the forging work was finished by hand and has lasted for hundreds of years.

The last procedure is polishing.



Sticks in the Mud

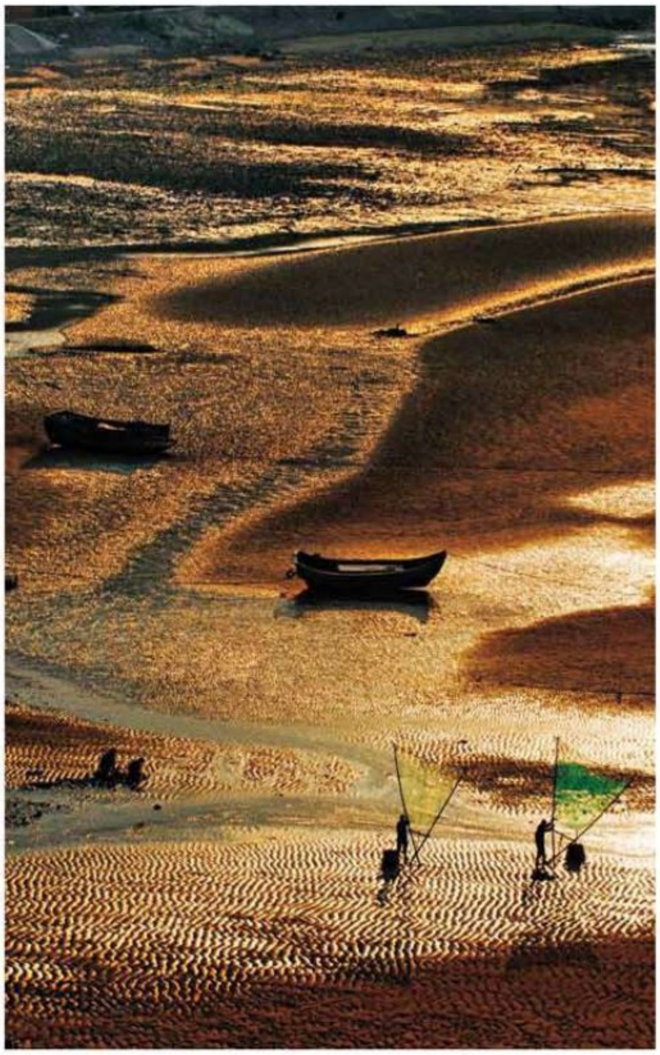
Text and photographs by Fan Jing

Beiqi is in eastern Songgang Village of Xiapu County. At dawn, fishermen wander the mudflat. Beiqi is the perfect place to photograph the coastal mudflat, gather seashells, and experience a memorable sunrise.

Coastal mudflats usually appear in sheltered bays along the intertidal area, where sediment is deposited by tides, so the area is usually submerged and exposed on a daily basis. In Xiapu County, Fujian Province, a long and narrow mudflat has been dubbed the most beautiful in China.

Xiapu's coastline is flanked by low granite hills, which create a perfect natural viewing deck for the celebrated mudflat. Hills on the Xiapu shore range from 100 to 300 meters high, with soft slopes, so they're easily scalable by foot. Because of the granite, there are few trees to obstruct the view, which ensures visitors a breathtaking panorama and helps Fujian's largest mudflat stand out from other Chinese coastlines.

The Xiapu mudflat is primarily composed of sand and mud, and because it is underwater for about half of each day, admirers can only appreciate its beauty when the tide is low. The constant tidal washing creates a surface design akin to a tiger-skin pattern. When the tide first begins to recede, lines in the mudflat gradually become visible through the seawater, and as time passes, the exposed area increases while the tiger-skin pattern becomes deeper and clearer. As its marine cover dissipates, the mudflat awakes to reveal a mysterious world from under the sea. At first, an isolated "island" appears, still surrounded by water, but gradually the island grows until it unites with the surrounding mudflat.


On the Xiaohao mudflat, fishermen comb the sea.

Xiapu's plentiful breathtaking scenery already attracts plentiful visitors. Tourists can watch the sun set over the sea in Xiaohao and Dongbi, and see it rise again from the marine horizon in Beidou. Additional popular activities include beachcombing in Beiqi, seaweed collecting in Shajiang, clam hunting in Qidu, and visiting the boat people in Yantian and Dong'an. Even the local lifestyle seems an irreplaceable piece of the natural environment.

The most famous Xiapu products are several varieties of seaweed and pickled mustard tuber. Late April to early May is the harvest season for seaweed, a cold-water alga that tends to rot when temperatures rise above 25 degrees Celsius. In Xiapu, the seawater will usually exceed that threshold by late June, so any harvesting of seaweed must happen earlier. Xiapu is located far away from areas that suffer industrial pollution, and its border areas are devoted to agriculture, so the water is clean and rich with nutrients. Seaweed from Xiapu is blessed with unique shape, texture, and nutritional value.

The sea-farming area of Xiapu seaweed covers more than 2,000 hectares, and during harvest season, scores of farmers work on the shore, creating an image like a traditional Chinese ink painting brought to life. A heavy seaweed scent is infused into the normally salty sea air, and harvested seaweed hangs from bamboo sticks. When gusts of wind pass through, the seaweed begins dancing, and when the sunshine pierces the seaweed's dark-green skin, it causes sparkling golden rays that spectacularly light up the entire mudflat.

In recent years, Beiqi's mudflat primarily grows laver, a kind of seaweed. Farmers employ a technique known as "pillaring," whereby bamboo sticks measuring 10 meters are embedded two meters deep in the soft mud, and nets are hung between them. On the 5-square-meter surface area of each net, farmers spread leaf-shaped laver. Dozens of nets are tied to the bamboo "pillars" and spread across the sea, with spaces for boats to pass through. Sea-farmers cultivate and harvest their crops from the boats, and when one views the tens of thousands of nets and pillars from afar, Beiqi's mudflat appears as a picturesque amalgamation of squares and dots. The marvelous scene is awe-inspiring for most visitors unfamiliar with such sea gardens.

The most beautiful moments for the mudflats fall on the 1st and 15th of the first lunar month, which bring the year's biggest tides. Locals stay in tune with the tide's seasonal rhythm, as it is a large factor in the production of sea products. Pictures are worth a thousand words, but not even the most elegant Chinese painting can replace the images visitors to Xiapu see with their own eyes. Pristine water and skies dotted with fluffy clouds complement glowing sunsets to create a stunningly dynamic picture, with the scene slightly changing with each passing moment. The pure natural elements combined with the local Xiapu people form a marvelous poem too sublime for words.

Tips:

Transportation: To drive to Xiapu, take G15 Shenhai (Shenyang-Haikou) Expressway, which connects many of China's coastal cities along its 3,710-meter total length. The nearest airports to Xiapu are in Fuzhou and Wenzhou. Another option is an intercity bus from Xiamen or Ningbo. When you arrive at Xiapu, a taxi or the local bus can take you to the scenic spots.

Accommodation: There are many hotels in Xiapu. Xiapu Island Grand Hotel is a three-star hotel. A standard room is 188 yuan during most of the year, and 398 yuan in peak travel periods. Internet is available in the room. Next to the bus station is Kaifu Business Hotel, which offers standard, computer-furnished rooms for 158 yuan a night during the non-peak periods and 138 yuan without a computer. Most other ordinary hotels offer rooms for about 100 yuan a night during the off season.

Food: Xiapu is heaven for seafood lovers. Seawater fish, shrimp, crab, shellfish, squid, and octopus are the main varieties of seafood offered in Xiapu. Visitors can also enjoy seafood from sidewalk snack stands at comparatively low prices.

At around 5 a.m., the shimmering sun begins glistening on the sea surface and fishing boats cause ripples across the mudflat.

Dongbi is in eastern Sansha Village in Xiapu County. Many small islands are scattered around Dongbi. When the sun sets, the boats all head home and the once noisy and busy harbor gradually turns tranquil under the orange twilight.

During the harvest season, the sticks are adorned with seaweed. When the wind blows, the long seaweed waves like a skirt.

A SUNKEN TREASURE

— The Underwater Great Wall

Text and photographs by Feng Bin

On an early summer weekend, I set out with several friends for a getaway. Although we spend the morning navigating Beijing's labyrinthine traffic, by the afternoon we are in Qianxi County, Hebei Province, home of the Xifengkou Great Wall. It is my second visit to Xifengkou, and I can't help but notice that our alternate route takes a little longer than my previous trip.

Located 50 kilometers northwest of Qianxi County Seat, Xifengkou Great Wall sits next to the Panjiakou Reservoir and is notable for its remarkable preservation without the aid of modern restoration. Due to its strategic geography, Xifengkou was a frequent area of conflict during ancient wars. In terms of its construction, Xifengkou differs from other parts of the Great Wall. Its military design includes both a pass and several fortresses. The fortresses rest in a basin surrounded by mountains, composed of solid stone. The pass was constructed to the north of the fortresses with three sides facing mountains and the fourth bordered by water. Although its history is long, Xifengkou gained its greatest fame in the last century as the site of a Chinese victory against Japanese invaders in 1933.

Part of Xifengkou is submerged in water, creating an unparalleled visual of an aquatic Great Wall. When looking over the wall from nearby mountaintops, only a few segments are visible above the water surface. The wall meanders around the mountain and gradually dips into the water for two kilometers before rising again on mountains to the west. Locals report that when Panjiakou Reservoir was constructed in 1976 to harness the Luanhe River, the water rose above the wall. Now, the underwater section is only visible during dry seasons.

"Here we are," announces the boatman driving us to the underwater Great Wall after a 10-minute journey across the Panjiakou Reservoir. Through crystal water, the submerged subject is clearly visible. With waves, the wall comes to life, its image swaying as the water rises and falls. Combined with reflections of the mountain wall shining on the surface, the whole scene becomes even more magnificent. The boatman illustrates that preserva-

On a list of China's most recognizable attractions, the "Great Wall" is always near the top of the list. Once a massive military defense project to protect against nomadic invaders from the North, the Great Wall gradually lost its functionality over time, but remains a national symbol of pride and effort. Most people associate the wall with Beijing, and indeed the two most-visited sections – Badaling and Juyongguan – are just outside the capital. However, the wall stretches for thousands of kilometers across northern China, and some of the lesser known sections are well worth a visit.

Meandering with the mountain, Xifengkou Great Wall gradually bends into the water and extends for about two kilometers. Only a small part emerges above the surface.

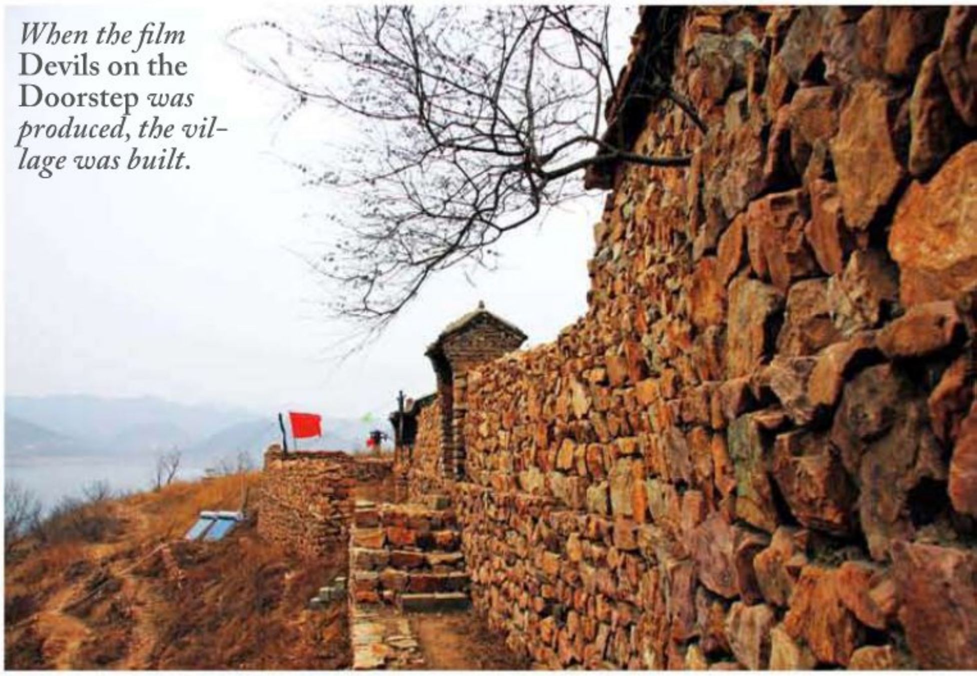
Xifengkou at dusk.

Overlooking the Panjiakou Reservoir from an ancient wall.

tion of this section of the wall is now necessary since a large part of it is under water for most of the year. However, when Chinese Central Television sent reporters underwater to document the wall's condition several years ago, they found very little recent damage.

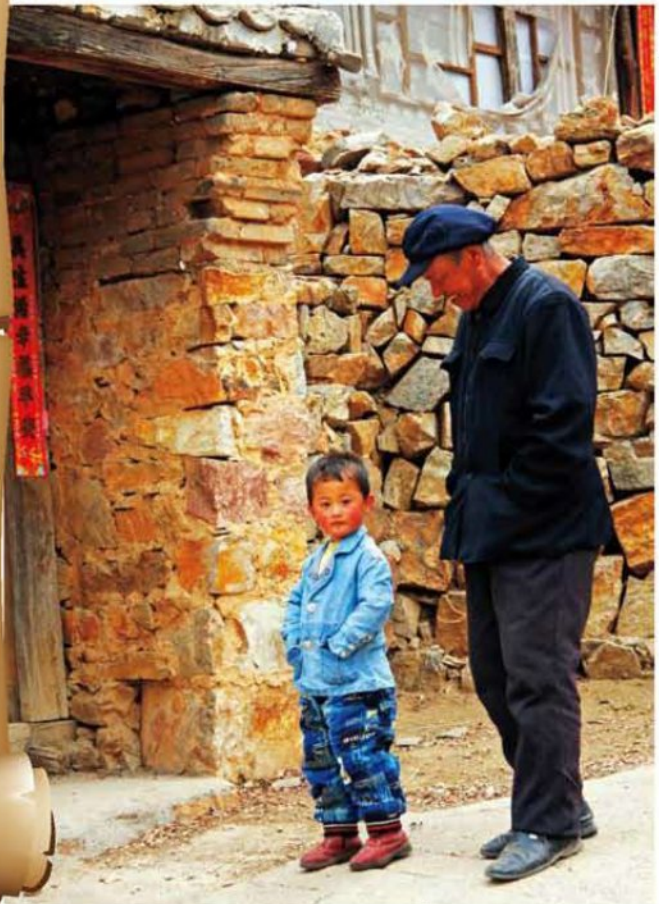
On the other side of the river, the wall caresses the steep terrain as it winds up to the mountaintop. Years ago, director Jiang Wen chose this location to shoot the film *Devils on the Doorstep*, and built a small village there as his crew's base camp. Now, the village has been transformed into a scenic spot, with some nearby locals offering accommodation and food for tourists. "A famous filmmaker chose our home to shoot his film," smiles the boatman, "and this helps explain the glorious history of this place in defeating the Japanese aggressors."

An ancient book describes Xifengkou as "sitting among deep valleys and precipitous mountains, and standing on bold cliffs," but now that it is partially underwater, its magnificence is slightly transformed. However, looking down on the Great Wall from a boat is a new and unexpected treat.



When the film Devils on the Doorstep *was produced, the village was built.*

A boat tour to view the underwater Great Wall.



An elderly man with his grandson.

Tips:

Transportation:

Bus transportation to Xifengkou is not very convenient, so a private car is recommended. A weekend is more than enough for sightseeing and relaxation.

Accommodation:

Hotels and family inns can be found at Xifengkou for reasonable prices. The former film set of the movie *Devils on the Doorstep* has been developed into a holiday village. All the houses are now ready to receive tourists.

Also, campers are welcome to set up tents around the reservoir.

Snacks:

Wild mushrooms, wild vegetables, fish, tofu, and lamb soup are local favorites. Tourists are strongly recommended to try fish from the Panjiakou Reservoir. You can either grill the fish by yourself or have a local household cook it for you.

Piano Island

Text and photographs by Chen Rui

A local combing the beach.

Gulangyu Island is located to the southwest of Xiamen, Fujian Province, and covers an area of 1.87 square kilometers. It is on China's list of National Scenic Spots and has been dubbed 'Garden on the Sea', 'Living Architecture Museum,' and 'Piano Island'. The latter name comes from it having more pianos per square meter than any other place in China. It is a charming destination full of time-honored buildings, hospitable locals, and delicious seafood.

The island was once colonized by Europeans who built remarkable mansions. When they eventually left, they abandoned their homes and their pianos – hence the name 'Piano Island'. Visitors can enjoy the sound of tinkling ivories, which gives the island a distinct romantic charm, making the visitor feel as if they are in a musical heaven.

During the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties, Gulangyu was named Yuanshazhou Island. But some time during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) it changed its name to Gulangyu, which means 'drum wave islet'. It was named due to the noise the waves make when they hit the rocks. This sound is awe-inspiring, and can make visitors feel like they are alone with the power of nature.

The view at night across the bay to Xiamen.

Gulangyu Island has about 20,000 permanent residents, all of whom enjoy a comfortable, relaxing life. Visitors can see them catching fish, relaxing in the central square, or even whiling away the hours playing mahjong. It can make the visitor feel as if they are part of a normal, functioning community, as well as a paradise by the sea.

Among the many scenic spots on the island, the most attractive are Sunlight Rock and the Shuzhuang Garden. There is also Haoyue Park, Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong) Memorial Hall, Seaworld, a Waxwork Museum, Koxinga's statue, Gangzihou Bathing Beach, and the Piano Museum. Sunlight Rock is the highest point on the island at over 90 meters. Visitors should also not miss the Zigzag Bridge which can be found on the island's southern shore. There are many pavilions dotting the bridge, with names such as 'Watching Anglers', 'A Thousand Waves' and 'Moon in Water'. Visitors can feel as if they are walking on the sea, especially when the tide is in.

After this, it is a good idea to take a boat ride. An 8 kilometer cruise passes by Monkey Island, Baozhuyu (Pearl) Island, and Huoshaoyu Island (or 'Burning Island,' so named because it is an extinct volcano). In the evening, tourists can chat with locals by the shore, or relax with a cool drink in one of the many cafes. It feels as if all of the stresses of city life suddenly disappear.

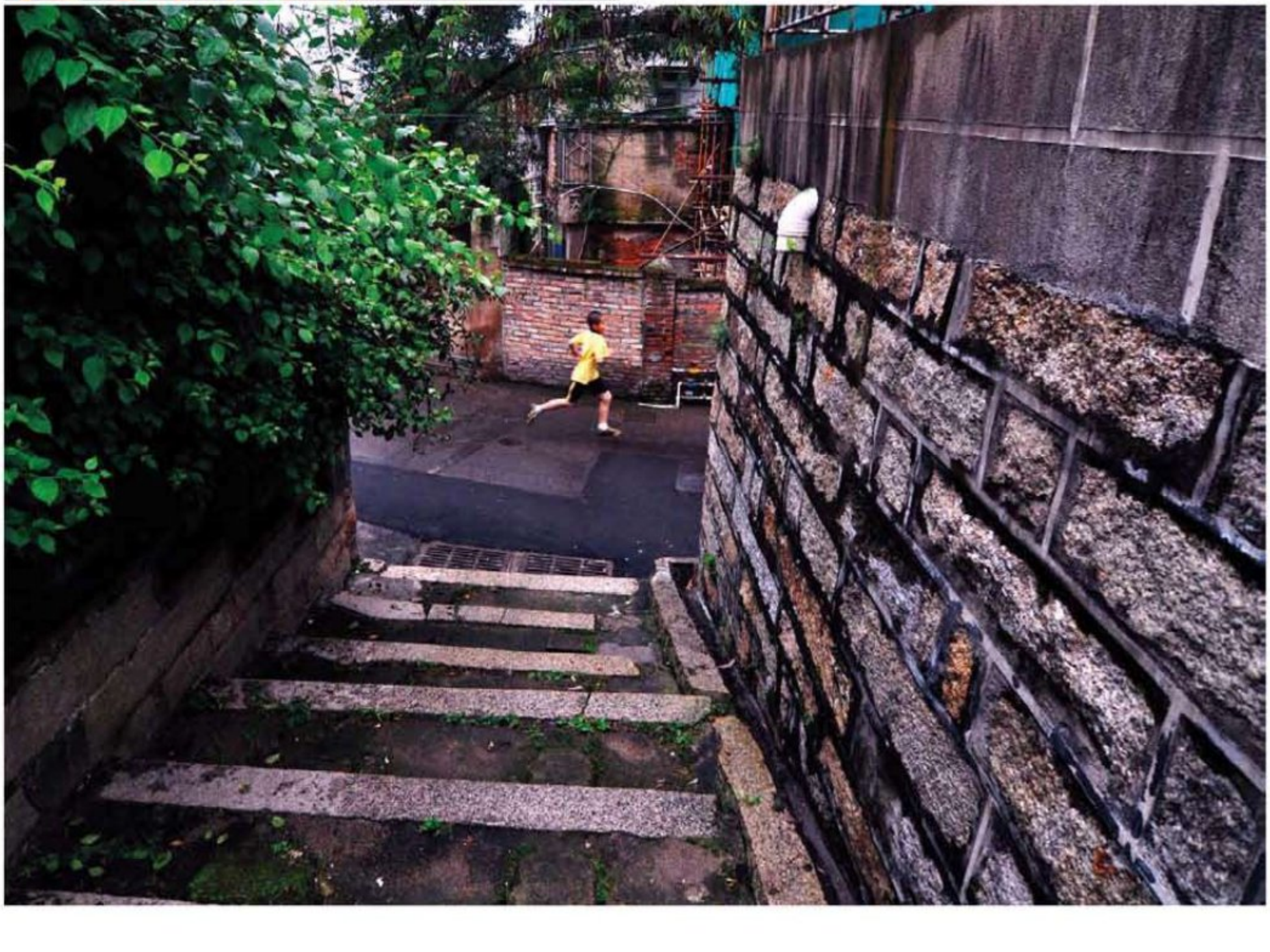
Gulangyu has many elegant trees and exotic birds. The locals are also very friendly and will often invite you in to sample Fujian Province tea. On Gulangyu, cars are forbidden, which gives the island a peaceful relaxing atmosphere. Goods are still carried by diligent porters up the steep slopes of the charming alleys. This, along with the time-honored architecture, makes visitors feel like they are walking through another century, as if in a dream. Gulangyu has been dubbed 'Pedestrian Island'.

An egret catches its lunch.

How to Get There:
Visitors can take a ferry from Xiamen harbor, which leaves frequently. The journey to Gulangyu only takes 10 minutes. The outbound journey is free (unless guests sit upstairs in which case there is a 1 yuan charge). The return journey costs 8 yuan.

Today, the predominant industries in Gulangyu are tourism and fishing. Many colorful basins full of fresh seafood sit outside restaurants, with friendly bosses beckoning customers inside. On the many beaches, tourists can try to catch a fish themselves, or else enjoy windsurfing, jet skiing, or a ride on a paddle boat. A 4 kilometer ring road around the island is highly convenient, and makes all attractions easily accessible. Visitors will not want to leave this magnificent fairytale island by the sea.

The former German Consulate, now a relaxing cafe.



Gulangyu features many narrow, hilly streets.

Bathers leave their shoes as they take a dip in the water. Sunlight Rock is in the background.

What to See:

Sunlight Rock, known also as Dragon Head Hill (Longtou Shan) by Chinese and Camel Rock (Luotuo Shan) by foreigners, faces Tiger Head Hill across the bay on Xiamen Island. Locals say that the dragon and tiger join forces to guard Xiamen Harbor. Sunlight Rock Temple, which is located partially within a cave, is often called "One Tile Roof" (Yi Pian Wa) because a large rock forms part of the roof. It is also called a "Pocket Temple" because it covers only 2,856 square meters. Visitors to Gulangyu should also try to see Shuzhuang Garden, Haoyue Park, Koxinga Memorial Hall, Seaworld, Gangzihou Bathing Beach, and the Piano Museum.

Seafood on sale.

Despite all the tourists, Gulangyu is still a fully-functioning community.

A corner piano. Pianos were used as decorative furniture as well as instruments.

Whiling away the hours playing mahjong.

A former colonial mansion.

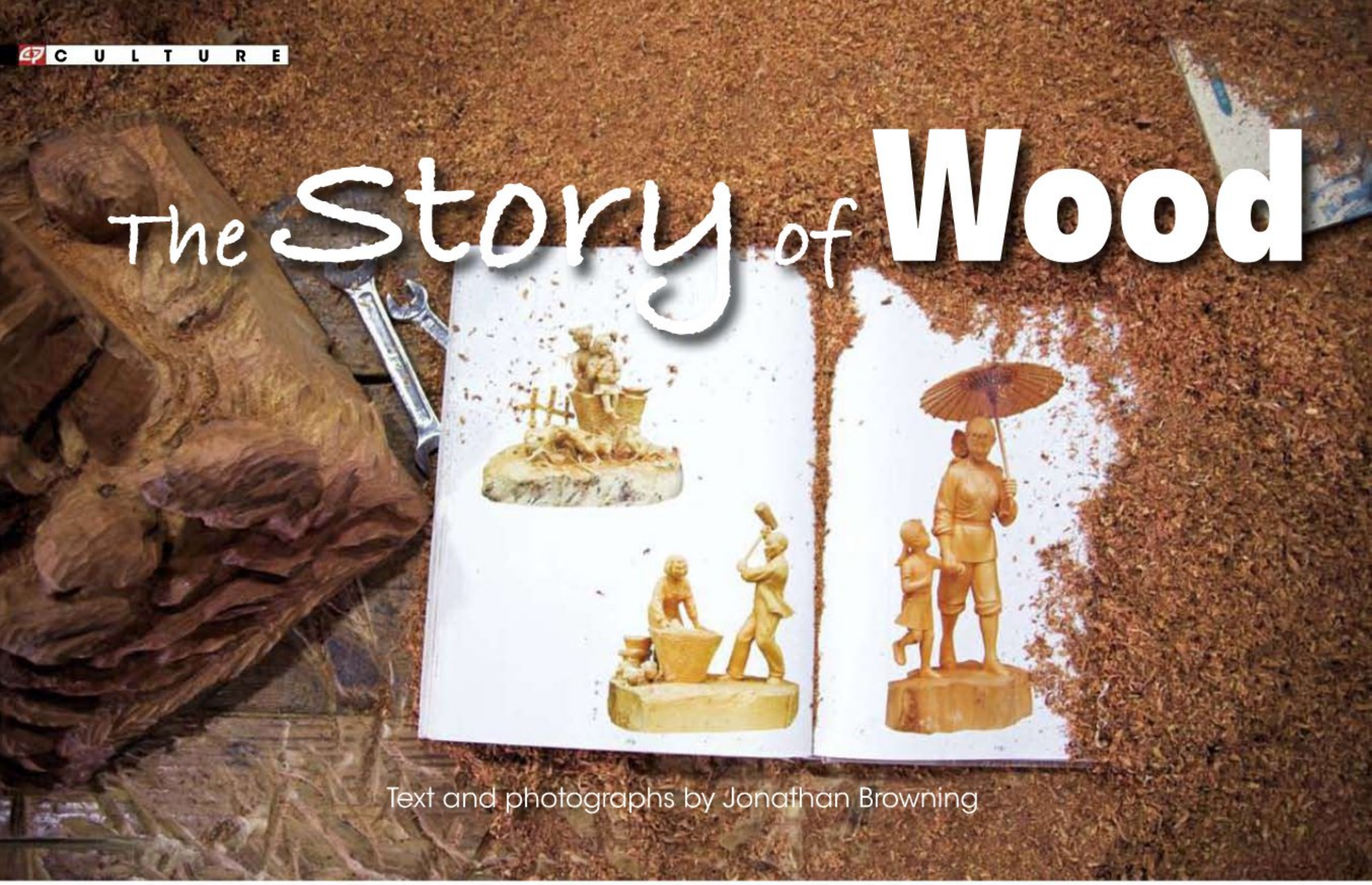
Where to Stay:

The island features numerous hotels and youth hostels, many of them located in former European consulates or private mansions. It is cheaper to stay in Xiamen however and get the ferry across, which is very reasonably priced and convenient. Xiamen is a major coastal city and is easy to get to. When visitors tire of Gulangyu (virtually impossible to do) it is also worth exploring.

What to Eat:

Fresh seafood, deep-fried pork rolls and peanut soup are all available at the Lujiang Harbor View Hotel's rooftop restaurant, which lies just across the bay in Xiamen and offers great views of Gulangyu. On the 24th floor of the Seaview Building there is a Pizza Hut which is also famous locally for providing tremendous views.

Fetching goods from the docks. There are no cars on Gulangyu, so everything is still moved by porters. The skyline has changed, but some things never will.



The Story of Wood

Text and photographs by Jonathan Browning

An open sculpture book lies on a table covered in sawdust.

As a British freelance photographer based in Shanghai, I've been living in this amazing country for just over three years now. During these three years I have seen and experienced much of Chinese culture and its traditions. Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to leave behind the hustle and bustle of Shanghai and escape down south to the subtropical province of Fujian.

I stayed in the provincial capital, Fuzhou, a medium sized city of 6 million. I had heard the area was famous for its wood carving, in particular Buddha and Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) statues, as well as the huge ornate solid wooden tea serving tables often seen in upmarket tea houses and shops. I ventured around the outskirts of Fuzhou and soon found some of these wood carving workshops. In one particular area they ranged in size and scale from small independent workshops and converted rooms in family homes, where the father would do a single project at a time, to much bigger operations where they get huge weekly deliveries of raw material – tree trunks and roots. I chose the biggest wood carving 'factory' to take photos.

A man works on a Guanyin sculpture.

This facility has a huge outdoor courtyard area where deliveries of wood sit until they are ready to be taken inside and carved. Most of the work is carried out within a two-story warehouse. The first floor is filled with unfinished sculptures and figurines, which appear to be randomly scattered. After talking to the workers, I discovered the room was divided into sections from carving the initial shape with a chainsaw, to fine detailed carving and sanding of the finished products. On the second floor was the show room where potential customers could browse works and request original commissions.

Fujian's most famous wood carvings are primarily made from the Longan tree. Highly skilled local artisans in Fujian have been making Buddha statues and Guanyin figurines since the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. They use the Longan roots with their natural twisting and rough node characteristic and transform them into amazingly intricate sculptures of birds and snakes living in trees, as well as mythical beasts from Chinese legends.

The sculptures from this workshop are sent all over China and abroad, either to private collectors, distributors, Buddhist temples or grand tea houses. The price tag for such pieces runs into tens of thousands of yuan. Considering the average local salary is around 1,000 RMB a month, just selling one or two sculptures a year is enough to keep bread on the table for most independent sculptors. Skilled carvers at the factory can earn in excess of 10,000 RMB per month which is a huge amount of money outside of Shanghai and Beijing. Most of these artisans got into carving from an apprenticeship, learning the ropes as they went. Nearly all are locals who grew up in the area and continue to live close to their workplace.

Despites its creative nature, the workspace very much resembles factory line operation as workers clock-in at 8 a.m. and finish at 5 p.m. with only a short lunch break. During working hours, craftsmen are engaged and focused on the piece on which they are working. It seems they all enjoy their work and during the break, higher-skilled carvers go upstairs to the showroom area to drink green tea and look at wood carving magazines, which showcase the latest designs from artisans all over China.

Nothing like this really exists in my home country – England. I do wonder though how long this ancient craft can continue as the world focuses more on protection of the environment and forest preservation. Although it is in many ways a specialized industry, it is also a colossal one that employs many thousands across Fujian Province. Hopefully a balance can be struck between creating beauty from nature and leaving natural beauty well alone.

A sculptor poses with a chainsaw next to the piece he is working on.

Two wooden figures at a table playing chess.

Inside the factory, sculptures can be seen everywhere.

16TH ASIAN GAMES Guangzhou 2010

Thrilling Games Harmonious Asia

A Trio of Co-Hosts

Text by Chen Biao
Photographs by Duan Wei

Century Lotus Stadium, opened in 2006 for the 12th Guangdong Sports Meet, will host synchronized swimming events during the Asian Games. Its 2,767 seats have already served spectators of international events such as the 10th World Synchronized Swimming Championships, diving trials for the 2008 Olympic Games, and the 12th Asian Swimming Championships.

Foshan: Legendary Martial Arts

"Don't provoke Foshan locals," joke neighboring residents, "because you will probably be treated to some kung fu."

Because of internationally popular films such as *Once Upon a Time in China* directed by Tsui Hark and *Ip Man 2* about Wing Chun Kung Fu, Foshan has gained a reputation as a hub for Chinese martial arts. Recent years have seen a rise in Foshan tourism, especially around classic Chinese martial arts locales like the memorial halls of Ip Man and Wong Fei-hung. During summer holidays, even more visitors stream in to learn Chinese martial arts.

Perhaps because of the duality of Chinese martial arts, coupling power and poetry, the city of Foshan has been chosen to host the events of boxing and synchronized swimming. Foshan will introduce the event of women's boxing to the global sporting scene prior to its inclusion in the 2012 London Olympic Games.

"For the benefit of all involved" is presented as a guiding philosophy for Guangdong officials. Along with Guangzhou, three co-host cities are participating in the upcoming Asian Games: Foshan, Dongguan, and Shanwei. As one learns more about these individual cities, it becomes clear that they were destined to host certain events of the Asian Games.

Dongguan: Heavy Legacy

As the effects of the global recession slowly fade away in China, it has become common on the streets of Dongguan to see signs soliciting employees, with some even reading "Welcome Back Former Employees." The city has long had a reputation as the "World's Factory." In the Dongguan Gymnasium, a banner from the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) finals remains as evidence of the fierce competition that took place there. The gym will serve as the venue for weightlifting during the Asian Games.

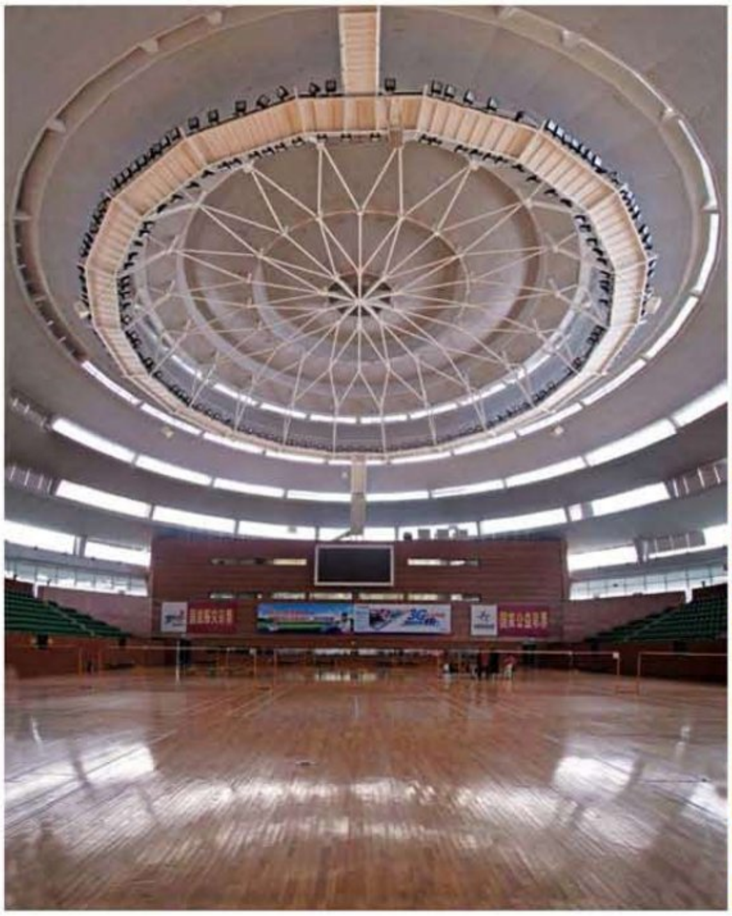
Many have wondered why a CBA venue was chosen to host weightlifting. A tour of Shilong Town in Dongguan will shed more light on the decision. The township has proved an ideal origin for some of China's strongest sons and daughters, including Chen Jingkai, the country's first world record holder since the founding of New China, Zeng Guoqiang, China's first Olympic gold medalist in weightlifting, and Chen Weiqiang, another Olympic champion. The town's reputation as China's Weightlifting Capital is certainly well deserved considering it has produced lifters who have earned a combined 19 world records, 29 world championships, 26 Asia titles, and 59 national gold medals.

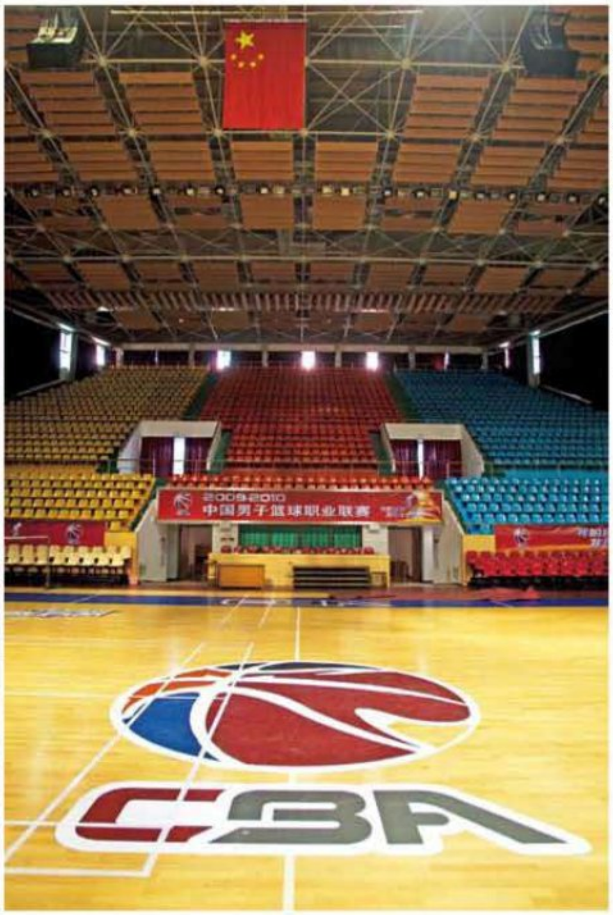
Shanwei: Water Sports

Shanwei is a small, tranquil city on the shores of eastern Guangdong. It can easily be confused with Shantou, a Special Economic Zone, due to sharing the same first character. Shanwei is often mentioned in the same breath as Peng Pai, who led a peasant movement during the 1920s.

The geography of Zhelang in Shanwei resembles South Africa's Cape of Good Hope, which makes it an ideal location for aquatic competition and training. It will host sailing events during the Asian Games.

Additionally, the area is home to several popular tourist attractions such as the Temple of Goddess Matsu of the Sea and Yuanshan Temple on Mt. Xuanwu.

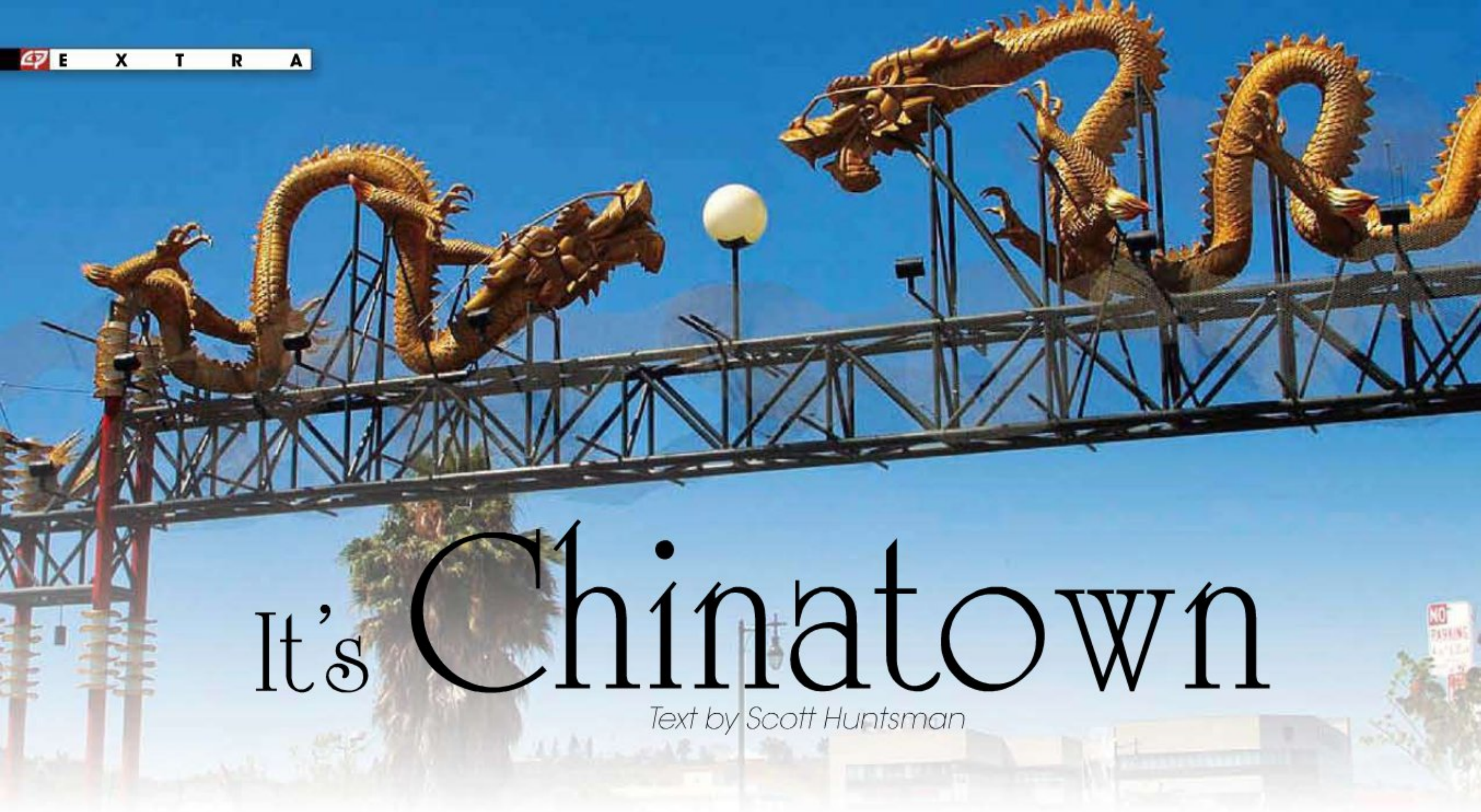




Dongguan Gymnasium, normally a major basketball venue, will host weightlifting events during the Asian Games. The warm-up area has been refurbished to satisfy the demands of international competition.

Lingnan Pearl Gymnasium in Foshan consists of a stadium, a training center, a gym for public sports, and a square for exercise, and was named for the shape of its three major structures. It will host boxing during the Asian Games.

Keyuan Garden in Dongguan was built in 1850 during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Though small in size, it is one of Guangdong's four most famous gardens. Its features include pavilions, terraces, towers, man-made landscaping, bridges, halls, and courtyards.



It's Chinatown

Text by Scott Huntsman

Upon returning to the United States after my first stint in China, I needed to get a medical examination as part of the working visa process to return to China. At first, I thought that one of the hundreds of clinics catering to the majority Hispanic population of Los Angeles would be the cheapest easiest option. When I met the doctor, Latino with a heavy accent, and handed him the medical form with both Chinese and English, he was utterly confused. No doubt he was accustomed to seeing forms with both Spanish and English, and normally examined those concerned with staying in the United States. I almost laughed out loud when he asked my nationality, repeatedly asking the wrong questions, perplexed as to why I would bring him a form with Chinese when I appeared as a white American. It's no surprise that the Spanish-speaking communities of Southern California have a hard time grasping why an American would seek a visa to live in any foreign country.

I soon realized that there was little chance of this doctor completing the form to the satisfaction of Chinese visa officers, and knew my mistake lay in going to the wrong clinic. I quickly left and headed to Chinatown. There, an ethnic Chinese doctor with perfect American accent related anecdotes of his several charitable excursions to China while casually completing the reasonably-priced examination, even including Chinese characters on the form to ensure that it would be satisfactory. When his nurse seemed to have trouble understanding my phone number, I eagerly started repeating the numbers in Mandarin, but was quickly reminded that the majority of Chinatowners in Los Angeles speak Cantonese (although latest census figures show that in all of Southern California, Mandarin and Cantonese speakers are almost equal).

Golden Dragon Gifts

A statue of Sun Yat-sen was erected in Chinatown's central plaza. by Aaron Nickels

Because of a network of artist friends in LA, I was already well-familiar with Chinatown, and knew it as a haven for painters of all ethnicities, due to its ideal studio spaces for rent at reasonable prices. So, when I took my Chinese girlfriend for a visit to my old stomping ground, it was an obvious choice to drop by Chinatown. As soon as we stepped off the airplane, I was greeted outside LAX by an extremely friendly stranger, who soon started asking me for money, reminding me of an annoying begging tactic in LA. In the week I spent in Los Angeles, I was approached by at least a dozen friendly strangers who feigned interest in my life for some amount of time before hitting me up for cash.

Eerily, I felt more at home when we arrived at Chinatown, and I saw the street signs with both Chinese and English, along with flocks of shoppers carefully browsing through fruit stands on the sidewalk (although many of the shopkeepers hired Latino help). I quickly started snapping pictures, ignoring my girlfriend, and the situation quickly snowballed into a fight.

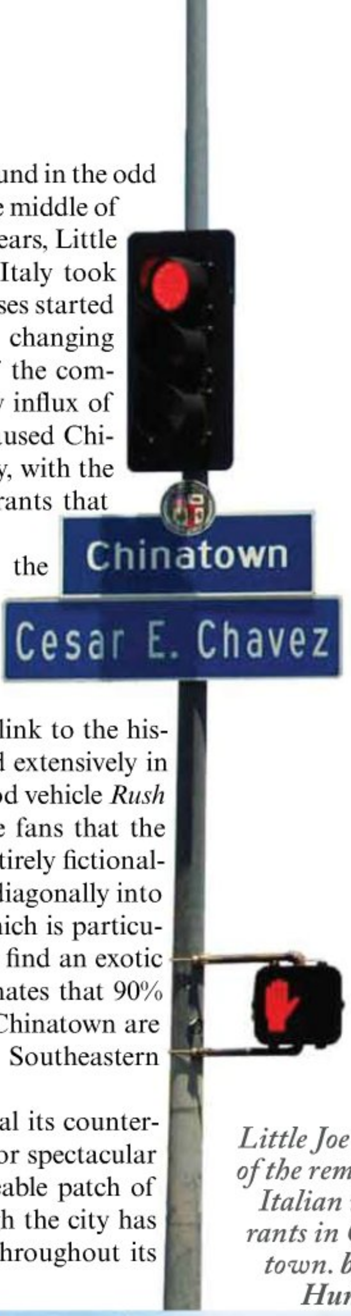
"That's Chinatown," I said to myself, misquoting the final line of the 1974 film, as my girlfriend stormed off into the familiar sea of dark hair.

It's no secret that Chinese people have spread all over the world, establishing impressive Chinese communities in many of the planet's major cities, but two of the most famous "Chinatowns" can be found in California. Over 70 percent of imports coming to the United States from China pass through one of California's ports, so it's fitting that the state is home to the world's most thriving Chinese communities outside of China. Although San Francisco's Chinatown is the largest and most historic, Chinatown Los Angeles has gained even more exposure in the modern era with help from its proximity to Hollywood, giving filmmakers a taste of the Orient so close to home.

But Chinatown Los Angeles has a rich history even older than Hollywood itself, and its presence in the City of Angels can be traced back to the 1880s, although the original location is several blocks from where Chinatown can be found today. Amidst strong anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants were banned from purchasing land. Against this backdrop, Chinatown fell into a state of neglect since Chinese residents were merely tenants, and the American property owners refused to repair buildings, allowing them to fall into decay. This helped make way for city officials to clear out Chinatown and begin construction of Union Station in downtown Los Angeles, which opened in 1939.

A timeline shows that efforts to resurrect Chinatown were quick, as "new" Chinatown claims 1938 as its birth year. Led by Chinese American community authority Peter Soo Hoo, the modern Chinatown grew quickly and gained a reputation as a major tourist attraction in Los Angeles, thanks to attractions such as a "Hollywoodized" Shanghai-style Central Plaza and donated movie props. By the 1950s, anti-Chinese laws were repealed, and immigrants could finally own property and drastically improve the area. Today, Chinatown is just down the hill from the Dodgers' baseball stadium, dragons grace crosswalks, and in a city teeming with tourist attractions, it remains a major draw. A statue of Sun Yat-sen can be found near Broadway in Central Plaza, and the area's elevated train station was constructed in modern Chinese architectural style.

A piece of Los Angeles history that testifies to the resilience of Chinese immigrants can be found in the odd presence of two Italian restaurants in the middle of Chinatown. In New Chinatown's early years, Little Italy sat directly adjacent to it. When Italy took the wrong side in WWII, Italian businesses started leaving to other parts of the city and changing their names, causing a quick demise of the community. This, coupled with a new heavy influx of Chinese immigration during the war, caused Chinatown to gradually "eat up" Little Italy, with the exception of the two remaining restaurants that still stand to this day.



Although the vast majority of the aforementioned Oscar-winning Roman Polanski film, *Chinatown*, starring Jack Nicholson, has nothing to do with Chinatown itself, the film's title further evidences the community's inextricable link to the history of the city. It was fittingly featured extensively in the cross-cultural Jackie Chan Hollywood vehicle *Rush Hour*, although residents remind movie fans that the film's depiction of organized crime is entirely fictionalized. College Street divides Chinatown diagonally into a newer and older area, the latter of which is particularly popular for filmmakers wishing to find an exotic backdrop. *The Los Angeles Times* estimates that 90% of businesses in the southwest part of Chinatown are owned by first-generation Chinese and Southeastern Asian immigrants.

Chinatown Los Angeles doesn't rival its counterparts in San Francisco and New York for spectacular cultural festivities, but it is an irreplaceable patch of the Los Angeles cultural quilt. Although the city has dozens of ethnic communities spread throughout its endless pavement, none rival Chinatown's legacy or tourist draw. And given its central location in the world capital of facades, Chinatown Los Angeles' authenticity as a historical landmark is even more remarkable.

I found my girlfriend on a bench in front of a senior center, seemingly being comforted by a middle-aged man speaking Mandarin. When I talked to her later, I was surprised to hear her refer to him as a "stalker," reminding me we were definitely still in Los Angeles. And later, as we were munching on chow mien and sweet and sour pork, we realized that the man had followed us to the restaurant, approached our table, and asked politely for a few dollars. I was stunned with the fact that despite dragons, fans, and calligraphy, Los Angeles customs influence Chinatown as much as the other way around, and locals are indisputably Californian.

Little Joe's is one of the remaining Italian restaurants in Chinatown. ***by Scott Huntsman***

Crosswalks are paved with dragon designs. ***by Scott Huntsman***

Fresh Seafood @ Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun

The sumptuous seafood prepared by Rouge features a combination of Western & Asian specialties, impressive selection of fresh seafood, such as Jumbo Shrimps, Salmon, Crab, Scallops and many more. No matter what time of day, the stylish décor, beautiful flavors and delightful ambiance will delight even the most discerning patron.
For reservations, please call +86 10 5993 8888

It's Paella time @ Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun

In July, treat yourself a wonderful Spanish Paella at Valley Café to make your summer special. The Paella combines king prawns, shrimp, cuttlefish, scallops and monkfish with saffron rice. The rice, made traditionally, is slightly dry, but perfect when you add aioli sauce and a squeeze of fresh lemon. Our chef will take you though Spanish's gastronomic regions with exciting and mouthwatering creations.
For reservations, please call +86 10 5993 8888

Gloria Hotels & Resorts entitled with China's Most Investment-worthy Domestic Hotel Management Company of 2010, Golden Pillow Award

The recent concluded 7th Golden Pillow Award of China's Hotels Presentation held in Hangzhou had seen Gloria Hotels & Resorts crowned as China's Most Investment-worthy Domestic Hotel Management Company of 2010 and the president, Mr. Wang Jinjun, was awarded as one of "Leaders of the Hotel Industry".

HOTEL
INDUSTRY

Pictured here is Ms. Vikki Wei, Group Marketing Communications Executive of Gloria Hotels & Resorts with the awards

Summer ice tea quenchers at the Lobby Lounge in China World Hotel Beijing

What better way to quench the summer thirst than a refreshing glass of ice tea with your favourite flavour?

With a choice of six flavours that ranges across fruits to flowers and mocha tastes, you'll find one that is "your cup of tea" at the lobby lounge.

For reservations and more information, please call (010)6505 5838.

Mushroom delights at Summer Palace in China World Hotel Beijing

Savor mushroom at their best time of the year in a delectable special menu featuring Summer Palace specialty chef Stanley Yuen's signature item such as Double Boiled Fresh Abalone and Matsutake Soup, Braised Chicken with Wild Mushroom and Stir-fried Beef and Mushroom with Lotus Root.
For reservations and more information, please call (010)6505 5838.

New Al Fresco Dining – Sunset Lounge @ Swissotel Beijing

Sunset Lounge is a unique outdoor location, features an alfresco dining overlooking beautiful sunsets, serving sizzling juicy burgers, ice cold beers, refreshing cocktails with live band entertainment and much more. Sunset Lounge will be opened from 5pm till midnight daily as from June 9th to September 30th, 2010.

Private party or corporate event can be held at Sunset Lounge. Tailor made decoration and menu are available.

For more information and reservation: 010-6553 2288 ext. 2127

Ice Cream Medley @ Legendale Hotel Beijing

Beat the heat with us this sizzling summer.

Choose from a range of Premium Haagen Dazs Ice Cream.

For reservations and inquiries, please call 85113388 ext. 8998 (Lobby Lounge).

Udon Noodle Promotion @ L Café in Legendale Hotel Beijing

Udon Noodle is a good choice to liberate your taste buds and Summer hot. Few selections of Udon includes: Pork Chop with Udon; Fried Udon with Seafood; Curry Chicken with Udon; Beef Udon in Soup; Seafood Udon in Soup; Crab Meat & Egg Udon in Soup; Spicy Udon with Kimchee.
Free glass of Iced Tea accompany with each type of noodle.
Lunch 12:00 noon – 14:30 pm
Monday – Sunday
For reservations and inquiries, please call 85113388 ext. 8900 (L Café).

Passionate World Cup 2010!

Beer & Snack Set Menu: RMB228+15% surcharge
3L Budweiser draft beer, chicken skewer (2pieces), salted peanuts, deep fried chicken wings (2pieces), and salted stick.
Gifts: Choice of one T-shirt or one football (Gifts while stock up)

Valid from: Jun11 to July11, 2010
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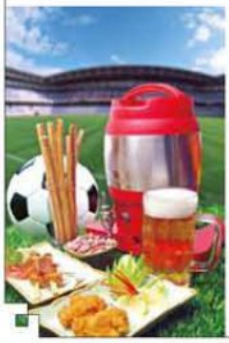

Venue: Garden Court Lounge, 1st floor at Holiday Inn Beijing Downtown
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